i owe you a black eye and two kisses.

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i owe you a black eye and two kisses.

by endingc

Summary

Five times Soap and Ghost have sex and one time they don't.

or:

The progression of Soap and Ghost's relationship shown through switching pov scenes of sex + intimacy with unspecified time between each

Notes

some things about me
1. i have played mw2 but i am Not well versed in military language at all
2. this takes place in a universe where mw3 is not canon. it is simply not canon to Me.

title is from the song Crush by Ethel Cain. all the chapter titles are also... Ethel Cain lyrics lol

trouble's always gonna find you baby, but so will i

Soap and Ghost don't have sex everyday, obviously. Soap can dream but the reality is, it is not uncommon for them to go weeks at a time without being naked together. Leaves, staggered missions, and general business are things that they have to deal with. It sucks, but it's reality.

Besides, it's different when it's been awhile. A few days pass, no biggie. After a week, their daily routine (when possible) feels tense. They watch each other in the mirror wall of the gym. Their feet meet under tables. They tease each other like teenagers.

By two weeks, the tension is painful. Each unintentional moment of body contact sears through Soap's clothes like an iron. Soap holds his breath. He's always been antsy, but he bounces his knee the second he sits and picks at his cuticles like a maniac.

Ghost keeps conversations short, curt. He seems… darker. It's actually hard to tell, sometimes. But Soap doesn't mind getting that glare across the room. He loves the way Ghost lingers close by—a constant heat source—but says nothing.

Soap picks methodically at the remaining resolve in him like a hangnail. At this point, he's praying for a day, an *hour*.

When Soap and Ghost have back-to-back leaves on opposite weeks, they go 18 days—though who is counting? Soap is counting. Hard. Counting like he needs to pass arithmetic.

When he gets back to base after his scheduled 2 weeks, his skin is buzzing with anxiety and need. He knows Ghost is waiting for him.

He reports immediately to Price's office: standard procedure. But it's the dead of night, and the barracks are silent. They chat professionally—Soap is caught up on what he's missed—and they exchange no more than three sentences of personal talk before Soap is out the door and headed to Ghost's room.

He showered before he left home, but Soap still stops in front of Ghost's door to make sure he doesn't smell. He smooths back his hair and exhales long and slow. It has been so long - *too damn long* - and he feels like a fucking virgin. He's not halfway through another thought when the door opens and he's facing doe eyes through a fading balaclava.

Soap's chest heaves with warmth as he is pulled roughly into the room by the hem of his shirt. He drops his duffel bag when the door closes and he is immediately pressed into it. Everywhere, Ghost is everywhere, and Soap uses his thumbs to bring the mask up to Ghost's nose as he crushes his mouth into Ghost's. Suddenly starving, Soap stops breathing to consume him. Their teeth meet and they take turns biting and pulling at each other's lips.

"Fucking," Soap pants "missed this." You, he wants to say, missed *you*.

He gulps in a huge breath when Ghost takes his mouth down to Soap's throat. He throws his head back and clutches the back of Ghost's neck, pulls him closer.

Ghost pulls away suddenly, keeping his hands on Soap's shoulders, thumbs rubbing his collarbones. Soap tries to lean forward and follow, but is pushed back.

"Did you report to command before you came?" Ghost looks like he's been meaning to ask.

Soap's eyebrows come together. "Are ye-" Astonished, he scoffs, but Ghost's face remains unchanged. "Aye, aye, ye arse" Soap says quickly, rolling his eyes and leaning forward again. Ghost meets him halfway with a smile and they only break away from each other's mouths to pull one another's shirts off. Ghost is barefoot already, but Soap trips when he's trying to kick his boots off, and uses this momentum to crash them towards the bed.

Ghost turns them, and shoves Soap like a feather onto the mattress. Ghost towers over him, bringing his hands to take hold of each of Soap's bent knees. From this angle, the small yellow side table lamp casts Ghost in a golden glow. He looks huge, and Soap's heart hammers in his chest. If only he'd take that stupid mask off.

"Ghost."

"Soap," Ghost replies in an instant whisper. His eyes rake all over Soap and he braces himself on one knee on the mattress. He crawls forward on his hands and chomps his teeth into the flesh around Soap's ribs.

"Ah-" Soap's hands fly to Ghost's head and he wants to feel his fingers in the hair under the mask. "Please," He breathes. Ghost freezes and looks up to stare at Soap through lidded eyes. Soap may or may not be pouting. With a sigh, Ghost brings up a hand and rips the mask away before immediately latching his lips around Soap's nipple again. Soap gasps and doesn't let himself wonder how long it's been since he's seen this face.

Finally, Soap can card his hands through the short blonde hair. Is it longer than it was before he left? He runs his fingers down behind Ghost's ears as his partner continues his path across Soap's chest.

Ghost must be more patient than Soap because *fuck* his nipples don't need that much attention right now when it's been so long and he's throbbing so hard in his pants that he can't think straight. "Ghost," Soap mewls, knuckles white in blonde hair. "Enough, *please*-"

"There's no rush, MacTavish." Ghost seems as composed as Soap remembers and it's pissing him off. He wants to kiss that smart mouth.

"Speak for yourself," Soap scrubs his hands across his face when Ghost trails lower and rakes his nails down Soap's waist before sinking them into his hips. Soap kicks his pants all the way down and Ghost hooks his forefingers into the waistband of Soap's compression shorts. Before he pulls them down, he runs his open lips across the throbbing heat of Soap through the fabric. Soap dares to look down, and is met with Ghost's unmoving eyes on his. "Fuuuck." He throws his head back down.

Ghost pulls the boxers off just enough to get them off of one of Soap's legs before he is back on him immediately, taking the head of Soap's cock between reddened lips. Soap feels hot all over. He blindly brings his hands back down to Ghost's head, resting one gently over his left ear and the other roughly into the short hair on top of his head. He feels Ghost moan around him and he inadvertently mimics the noise.

One of Ghost's hands grips and pumps where his mouth can't easily reach, and the other is hooked behind Soap's left knee. He incrementally pushes it back, until his other hand comes up to Soap's right knee to practically bend him in half. Ghost mouths down the length of Soap's cock, nuzzling against the trimmed hair at the base and sucking Soap's sac into his mouth.

Soap's legs tremble and his abs burn as he instinctively brings his knees to his chest. He watches Ghost dip lower, watches his eyes slip closed as the flat of his tongue presses against Soap's hole.

"Christ, fuck- fuck you-" Soap rambles and presses his eyes closed, feels heat flood across the skin of his chest.

There's an unmistakable puff of laughter from Ghost. He pulls back an inch, breathes "Missed you too, Johnny," and goes back to lapping his tongue against Soap's rim. He pokes the muscle, spits right against it, and brings over a finger to press into it. Soap's breath hitches.

Soap blindly slaps the nightstand with an open palm, and has to look over to find the knob to pull open the drawer. He nearly throws the lube towards Ghost at the end of the bed. "Please, want it so bad, please," he says, bringing his hands behind his own knees to pull them back. His cock is dark and leaking against his sternum.

Ghost gets up to kneel fully on the mattress between Soap's legs. He moves Soap's hands, adjusts their position so that Soap's spread legs are rested over his own.

There's a hard line through Ghost's black sweatpants, and Soap's chest swells with something akin to pride knowing Ghost may feel even half as desperate as Soap does right now. He reaches for the bulge, wants to feel him hot in his hand, but he can't reach.

"So impatient…" Ghost tsks through a smile.

"Yes, yes, correct," Soap barks. Too horny to care about insubordination. He nudges his ankles behind Ghost into the man's ass. "Come on, Lt, get on with it." Okay, maybe he's doing it on purpose now.

Ghost breathes slowly from his nose and silently presses two lubed fingers against Soap's hole, eliciting a gasp. He leans over Soap and uses his other hand to grip Soap's cock firmly at the base as he plunges in a finger in a fluid motion. Ghost fucks his finger into him quickly as he licks a line up Soap's throat to behind his ear. "Be good now, Johnny," he says low, an order.

Soap's stomach swoons and his cock throbs. "Yes sir, yes," Soap claws at Ghost's shoulders. These two fingers feel huge, Soap spins and breathes through the burn. He practically rocks into it, and Ghost's grasp on the hilt of his cock becomes painfully tight. "Fuck, please," he buries his nose into Ghost's neck, hears their dog tags clinking together loudly.

Ghost removes his fingers and returns with three. He doesn't seem to hesitate when he pushes them into Soap and drags them across Soap's prostate. He strokes the entire length of Soap's cock once before pushing back against Soap's knee to curl him into himself.

"Ach- fuck! I'm ready, please-" Soap adjusts his volume and his sentence trails off into a whimper.

"Ready for what?" Ghost teases, his fingers slowing down.

"You-" Soap drapes his arms over his face, stomach swooping at the pointed scrutiny. Ghost's fingers stop altogether. Desperately, "you, you, please don't stop-" Soap cries.

Ghost slips his fingers out and Soap goes silent, clenching after nothing. He peeks underneath his arms and watches Ghost pull his cock just enough out of his pants. Soap's mouth fills with saliva and he wants to devour him. He watches Ghost languidly stroke himself, and when he looks up, he catches Ghost already looking at him.

They stare at each other as Ghost slowly rubs the tip of his cock between Soap's spread cheeks and over his hole. The area is wet with spit and lube and the sound around them is obscene. Soap's hands meet Ghost's behind his thighs and he has never been more ready, has never wanted anything more- needed anything more.

Soap watches Ghost's jaw clench tight as he sinks in slowly. Gorgeous pink travels across his high cheekbones, over his neck, and down his pale chest. Soap distracts himself from the incessant burning of his body being split in two by tracking his eyes across the scars on Ghost's body. Just as he left him, he thinks, relieved.

They breathe, and then Ghost's hips are flush against Soap's ass. Ghost's head drops, and simply shuffling forward yanks a groan from them both.

Soap can breathe, but he has to really focus on it. The pain is farther now, but he's so damn full.

"So big," he mutters. He doesn't say that he's full of more than cock- that he's full of an even more painful feeling he's afraid to articulate in his mind. That his stomach is swooping in ways he fears it never has. He squeezes his eyes closed because he's afraid if he opens them again that he will see something in Ghost that he will have no choice but to say out loud. He presses his cheek into the pillow under him.

The warm feeling of Ghost's hands running up his body to come down and cradle his face snaps Soap back into the moment. "You okay?" Soap opens his eyes and sees Ghost looking down at him like something is wrong. "You told me to rush-" Soap can feel Ghost's eyes searching his face as he asks.

“Aye,” Soap wants to fix this, “just waiting on you big guy.” His mouth splits into an open grin and he relaxes when Ghost’s face softens too. Their foreheads press together as Ghost pulls out slowly before sinking back in. They gasp into each other’s mouths.

Ghost’s hands support his body upright on either side of Soap’s head, and Soap turns his head again so he can press open mouth kisses into Ghost’s pulse point. Ghost moans, planting his own lips on the other side of Soap’s throat. “So good for me, Johnny,” he says as he pulls out and sinks in, faster now.

“Just for you,” Soap bites into Ghost’s wrist.

“Mine,” Ghost damn near growls, mimicking the action by sinking his teeth under Soap’s ear. He sucks, hard, and snaps his hips. He drops to his elbows and builds to a relentless pace, punching gasps and moans out of Soap.

Soap grasps for purchase across Ghost’s wide back. He hooks his ankles in, pushing Ghost, encouraging him. “You knew just what I needed- fuck,” he groans into Ghost’s ear, kisses the words into his skin. This earns him a surprised moan from Ghost and he basks in the sound.

Ghost doesn’t break his pace when he snakes a hand in between them and takes Soap’s cock into his grip. Soap cries out, feels his stomach already tightening. Ghost collects the drool of precum that has been leaking out of Soap and takes him into a slippery hand to jerk him off properly.

“Not gonna last-” Soap croons, slips, tries to find balance in his gut but keeps tripping over his breaths. “Fuck, Simon, I can’t-”

Ghost mutters filthy nothings into the crook of Soap’s neck and over his chin; tells him how good he is, how pretty. “Can’t wait to watch you come for me,” he says. Soap’s eyes are closed but he feels eyes on him. He opens them a hair to confirm his suspicions: Ghost’s flushed face is right over his own. His lips are red and glossy and his pupils are huge.

When their eyes meet, Ghost’s lips quirk into a small, knowing smile. “Come for me, Johnny,” a whisper. And since Soap can’t deny Ghost of anything, he does just that. He keeps his eyes on Ghost’s, and slips. He stops breathing and spills between their stomachs, intentionally clenching down on Ghost inside him to make him follow right behind.

unpunishable

Chapter Summary

post-mission adrenaline quickie before a meeting. Ghost pov <3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The mission went fine. Ghost thinks it could have gone better, but the 141 did what they could with the situation they were put into. Intel was shit, and a recon mission in a remote warehouse turned into a near hour-long firefight with more men than anyone expected.

Ghost was supporting from a tree through his sniper sight. He watched Gaz and Soap's movements go from calculated and confident to frantic and risky. But he trusted them, and never once did he doubt that they'd be fine. He stayed calm, did his job, and got his men out of there alive. Shaken up and buzzing - sure - but safe.

On the helo ride back to base, Soap pressed himself to Ghost's side and barely spoke. He stared blankly ahead, bounced his knee, and only laughed politely at Gaz's occasional joke.

Ghost understands what's going on the second they land on base. Soap leads him in the opposite direction of Price's office and keeps turning back to see if anyone is following them. "Soap-" Ghost starts but is shushed immediately and thrown through a hallway door that Soap opens.

Ghost goes willingly into the closet. He allows himself to be pressed into the door by Soap, and he can feel the adrenaline coursing between the two of them.

"Debrief is in 25, sergeant." Ghost tries to be curt, presses his palms into Soap's shoulders. Soap just moans into Ghost's throat and nibbles on the exposed skin there. Ghost takes hold of Soap's mohawk and yanks him away. Soap allows himself to be pushed back this time, but not before sinking his teeth firmly into Ghost's collarbone.

Ghost perks at that. "Insubordination is a reportable offense," he hisses. Ghost is almost proud of how composed he sounds compared to how hard he's throbbing behind his belt.

Something flashes in Soap's eyes, and before Ghost can translate the look, he's being slapped across the face. It's softer than Soap can hit, Ghost knows that, but it still knocks the air from his lungs out of shock alone.

Ghost sighs, pops his neck on both sides, and faces Soap's cheeky, dopey grin. This motherfucker.

Ghost understands the feeling of post-mission adrenaline. He can see it in Soap's eyes; he can feel it energizing the space around them. Ghost is positively reeling after it. Okay, he can play this game.

Ghost inhales, raises his hand, and strikes his own palm across Soap's smiling cheek. Soap gasps off to the side and his eyes fall closed with a groan. Ghost brings the same hand to Soap's throat and backs them into the wall behind Soap.

Soap's eyes roll back and his hands grasp for Ghost's waist, his legs. They settle on the forearm pinning him back but he makes no effort to take Ghost's hand away.

Ghost crowds in close and presses his knee between Soap's legs. He grinds his thigh strap into Soap's hard cock through his clothes. He can be gracious, too.

"MacTavish," He sneers into Soap's defiant face, pointed at the ceiling. Soap's looking back at Ghost, staring through his lower lashes. He ruts on Ghost's leg shamelessly and groans.

"Lt," he croaks. The choked off sound of his voice makes Ghost's hand tighten, and Soap's eyes flutter closed through a moan.

They have to be in Price's office in 22 minutes. They really should go. Now.

"Misbehaving for attention, sergeant?" Soap opens his eyes and nods, a shortened movement from the grip he's in.

"We gotta be quick," Ghosts says, quieter, lifting his hand away from Soap's throat enough to give Soap an opportunity to breathe or pull away completely. He just pushes back into it and runs his tongue along his pouting lips. Ghost stares right into Soap's unblinking, watering eyes.

Ghost tentatively presses firmer, really constricts Soap's breathing for a second. He watches with bliss as those blue eyes fall closed. He feels the grinding against his thigh frantically pick up. God himself could be in this debriefing meeting -- Ghost isn't going anywhere.

"Hear me?" Ghost shakes Soap's head -- his eyes fly open. "We have to be quick," Ghost repeats. He can feel the rumble of Soap humming through the palm of his hand. His eyes slip closed again.

Ghost finally takes his hands away completely and smooths his palm against Soap's cheek. Soap gasps and his face fills with blood, igniting his tan skin into a deep flush. His eyes are wet and his lips are puffy when he says "Let me suck your cock, please. Will be quick, please." The words come out in a rush.

Ghost reels on his feet and counts to three. "Get on with it, then." He means to sound firm and ambivalent, but he wants to kick himself because he knows he just sounds as stupidly gone as he feels.

Ghost didn't mean to be holding up Soap by his thigh between his legs, but when he steps back, Soap nearly crumbles to his knees.

Unclipping his vest slowly, Ghost takes immense pleasure in watching Soap tear through his layers of clothing. Soap pulls down Ghost's underwear like they've personally offended him and he takes Ghost's cock into his mouth the second it's in front of him. His eyes close as he licks up and down the length, swirls his tongue around the head.

He looks up at Ghost. "Fuck my face, please," he whines and takes Ghost's hips into his hands. Ghost's cock bobs sweetly against Soap's pink cheek.

"Desperate slut," Ghost murmurs as he takes Soap's mohawk in a tight handful. Soap moans at that, tilting his head up all the way to look into Ghost's face. His lips are parted and his tongue is peeking out - wet and red. Ghost could cry at the sight.

Ghost uses his other hand to grab his cock, giving it a stroke before smearing the tip of it across Soap's now fully extended tongue. Immediately, Soap gets Ghost into his mouth and sucks greedily on the first few inches. He moans - Ghost can feel it. Keeping him at a distance, Ghost lets Soap try to lean towards him to get more and more into his mouth, to no avail. He groans in frustration.

Finally, Ghost wraps both of his hands onto either side of Soap's head. Carefully, he feeds his cock into Soap's mouth and towards his throat. He sees Soap's stomach constrict and feels him tremble in his grip. Ghost can feel Soap swallow around the head of his cock. He rocks slowly back and forth into the heat of Soap. "My perfect little slut," Ghost rubs his thumbs into Soap's temples. "Aren't you?"

He pulls out to let Soap take a heaving breath and cough before replying, "Yes sir." His wet mouth and thick accent sound fucking sinful. Soap has one hand braced against the tiled floor and one tightly gripping the back of Ghost's thigh.

"Good boy, Soap," Ghost purrs, nudging his cock back into Soap's willing mouth. He sinks in slowly, stopping only when Soap's nose is buried in the swath of short hair at the base of his cock. Soap's eyes are squeezed closed and he breathes short stagnated breaths. A tear streams down Soap's trembling cheek. His eyelashes are clumped together and his eyelids flutter. So beautiful.

Soap gags, blinking hard and releasing a bout of tears. Ghost keeps him there. He counts in his head, trusting himself to know where the line is and trusting Soap to stop him if he needed to. He doesn't want to hurt Soap. Just wants to destroy him, is all.

Ghost finally pulls away, worried for just a second that he went too far. Soap just gasps, rubs his palm across his dripping mouth, and wraps his hand around the hard length of Ghost. He laps at the tip and then sucks in earnest, using his hand to stroke the base. Ghost runs his hand affectionately through Soap's hair, speechless.

16 minutes, by Ghost's calculation. "We have to hurry up," he says as he slaps his cock softly against Soap's tongue hanging from his open mouth. "Want my cum down your throat, Johnny?"

Soap blinks slowly, smiling as he laps the dribbling head of Ghost's cock. "I'd die a happy man, sir." He stares into Ghost's face through blown pupils.

“Fucking hell…” Ghost steps forward an inch and leads himself deep into Soap’s throat again. He starts slowly with shallow thrusts. Soap eventually presses his open palms against Ghost’s ass and urges him to speed up, push deeper. He is going to kill him one day.

So Ghost picks it up. He grips Soap’s head and hair to fuck his throat at a comfortable angle. Soap just goes limp and takes even breaths through his nostrils.

Ghost’s gut swirls hot. “You look so good on my cock, Johnny.” He would be embarrassed of how broken his voice has become, but his head is spinning as he reels towards his orgasm. “Gonna come, fuck, *fuck*.”

Soap groans low, permission. Ghost stuffs himself as deep as he can and comes down Soap’s throat. Soap moans through it and rubs his thumbs across Ghost’s exposed hip bones.

Gently, Ghost pulls Soap away and lets his dripping cock fall from his mouth. Soap hunches, planting his hands against his knees and coughing towards the floor.

“Are you okay?” Ghost can’t imagine there will be a day when he doesn’t feel the urge to ask.
He is floating above the closet but he grounds himself enough to tuck his cock into his pants and pet his hand against the back of Soap’s head.

Sighing, Soap falls back and leans against the wall with his knees bent and spread before him. He grounds the heel of his hand against the line of his cock through his pants. “Aye, aye.” He says slowly. His voice is wrecked and his eyes are half closed when he looks up to smile at Ghost.

12 minutes. Plenty of time.

“Get up here,” Ghost bends to pick up Soap by his shoulders to stand him up. He cradles Soap’s face in his hands, uses his thumbs to wipe away the glossy layer of tears there.

You’re perfect, Ghost wants to say. Instead, he takes a hand away and lifts up his mask enough to silence himself against Soap’s mouth. Soap tastes like Ghost. His lips and chin are slick with spit and Ghost licks the moans right out of Soap’s mouth.

Soap’s arms hang weakly around Ghost’s neck as Ghost deftly gets through Soap’s belt and zipper. He pulls Soap’s cock out roughly and feels his stomach dip at the sight of how much precum there is in Soap’s underwear.

He shakes his head. “You get this wet from me fucking your throat?” Soap just moans and nods, ducking his head into the crook of Ghost’s neck.

Ghost steadies Soap with his other hand around the back of his neck. He rubs his thumb gingerly across the hard line of Soap’s jaw while he tongues the other side with open mouthed kisses.

“So good, always so good,” Ghost whispers in his ear. He squeezes the head of Soap's cock on an upstroke, and Soap thrashes his head back against the wall with a shuddering gasp.

Ghost's hand immediately flies to cover his mouth. "Shhh, shhh."

Soap's body trembles and his labored breathing wracks his body against the wall. He moans, eyes closed, into the leather of Ghost's glove.

Ghost takes Soap's face between his forefingers and thumb, forcing his cheeks together and lips open. "Love this mouth…" Ghost murmurs like he's talking to himself. He stuffs his index and middle finger between Soap's teeth and presses them down against his tongue. Soap opens his eyes and moans around the digits.

"You gonna come for me?" Ghost is rough with his strokes against Soap's cock now. It leaks violently over the black leather. "You did so good today, Johnny." Soap gasps at the words, wrapping his lips around the fingers in his mouth. "So proud of you," Ghost says in a low tone and watches closely as Soap's eyebrows come together, his eyes close, and he thrusts frantically into Ghost's fist as he comes all over himself. He bites into the gloved digits and whimpers quietly.

After a moment, Ghost gently removes his fingers from Soap's mouth and uses that hand to remove the other glove- now covered in cum. Soap twitches at the removal and slumps into himself.

It's quiet for a minute as Soap tucks himself away. Suddenly, he exhales a laugh.

"What?"

Soap looks up and tsks through a smile. "It's unprofessional to keep a subordinate from a debriefing meeting, Lt."

Ghost pulls down his mask and rolls his eyes. "Don't make me slap you again, sergeant."

Instantly, "is that a threat or a promise?"

"We have six minutes. Get your shit together." Ghost tries as hard as he can to get his authority-voice back, but his chest is warm with adoration. He clips his vest back on.

"Yes sir," Soap says through a smirk as he hustles with his own clothes.

Chapter End Notes

I hope y'all liked this one! I can guarantee the other chapters won't come as quickly as this one, but I was anxious to share this one. I am still trying to find Ghost's voice, and I hope he didn't seem too ooc.

as always, thank you for reading! <3<3<3

if you hate me, please don't tell me

Chapter Summary

It’s rare for Soap to have mornings with Ghost.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It’s rare for Soap to have mornings with Ghost. The man just gets up so early- which is weird because Soap used to think *he* got up early. Soap’s always been a 4:30 guy; he took *pride* in it. So imagine his disappointment when he finally starts having overnights in Ghost’s bed on a regular basis just to learn he’d be waking up alone.

It’s not terribly uncommon for Soap to wake up when Ghost does, though. When that happens, Soap gripes inwardly before forcing himself to stand even though its like four fucking am. Ghost will be getting ready quickly and Soap is rushing right behind muttering *wait, wait*.

Soap can’t lie, he really enjoys those mornings together. Sometimes they brush their teeth side by side in Ghost’s tiny bathroom before exchanging a few minty kisses. Then, they have coffee and tea standing outside in the dark of early morning.

He knows those days are a luxury though, not to mention irresponsible in terms of emotional implication. So, any attempts Soap makes to start getting up earlier are purely tactical. It keeps him sharp.

One morning, Soap isn’t sure what wakes him up. He just opens his eyes and he’s two inches away from a beige plaster wall in a dark room. But Ghost is there. His warm bicep and thigh are pressed against Soap’s spine.

Soap’s right arm is curled under his pillow, he checks his watch on his left wrist. He has to silence a scoff at the sight. The things been fucked up for weeks; the short hand got stuck just past 12 and hasn’t moved since. It’s… something 45. He’s thinking 3:45 because it starts to feel like morning the more he blinks.

He holds his breath for a second and is met with still silence. Ghost is definitely still sleeping. If he were awake, Soap would totally gloat about waking up earlier. And make fun of Ghost for his snoring. Fucking back sleepers.

Soap doesn’t think he’ll be able to go back to sleep, but he is at least comfortable. Ghost’s snores are frustratingly quiet and adorable. It’s warm in early summer, but this base isn’t the hottest they’ve stayed in and the thin blanket doesn’t weigh him down.

Ghost is a fucking furnace beside him, though. Soap runs hot too, which doesn't help. The winters will be great, he thinks briefly before feeling embarrassed at the thought. As if he has any right to assume there will be a place in this bed for him come winter.

There's no windows in this room, so it's near pitch dark. Soap has never had a room with a window, but he's seen Lieutenants have them in their fancier arrangements. He wonders what Ghost would choose if he had the choice.

Soap lets his mind wander, lets his thoughts pass without judgment. That's what Ghost told him to do when Soap asked about his meditation routine, anyway.

Soap blinks, and he's unsure if he fell back to sleep or not. But he's awake now, feeling Ghost shift beside him. Soap freezes, heart kicking like an idiot in anticipation.

Ghost groans, sighs, and turns over to scoop Soap into the tiniest of spoons. Ghost adjusts and shuffles so he has Soap perfectly pressed against the entire plane of his body. Does this happen every morning that Soap doesn't wake up early? He needs a new watch.

Soap hums, smiles. He adjusts himself to sink deeper in the position. When he does, the swell of Ghost's cock slides against the top of Soap's ass and stays there, warm.

Soap is absolutely giddy at the sensation. His pulse thunders in his ears and he's already half hard in his pants. If mornings with Ghost are rare, morning sex is like a fucking unicorn.

Feeling almost shy, Soap backs up a hair. At a snail's pace, he draws his hips in a circle and holds back a moan as Ghost's cock drags across his ass. In response, Ghost exhales onto Soap's neck before going silent again. Soap holds his breath.

Ghost breathes a sigh and keeps adjusting. His arm tightens around Soap's waist and brings him closer. Soap presses back into it, and shudders when he is rewarded with a throaty groan against his shoulder blades.

The hand around Soap's midsection moves to grip his hip instead, fingertips just dipping below the waistband of his briefs. Ghost's voice is thick with sleep when he says, "Cheeky," into the shell of Soap's ear. Soap *preens*.

Shamelessly now, he grinds his ass into Ghost's groin behind him and reaches his left hand around to sloppily run his fingers across Ghost's lower back under his t-shirt. Ghost meets him halfway each time until Soap is barely moving himself and Ghost is simply pulling and pushing him back from the grasp on his hip.

Soap feels dizzy and he focuses on the ripple of Ghost's muscles under his fingertips. He can practically feel Ghost throbbing against him.

"Don't think you've ever been this quiet in your life," Ghost says as he pulls away.

"Since when is enjoying the moment such a crime-" Soap says in his best nonchalant voice because where the fuck is Ghost going? Soap turns his head and reaches his arm out, following Ghost.

Ghost looks at him and puffs out a little laugh. “Don’t worry, I’m not going anywhere.” Oh, he was just leaning over to go into the side table.

“What time is it?” Soap rolls over fully now to his left and his eyes roam the dark room.

“4:11,” Ghost comes back over and lays to face Soap. Their legs naturally intertwine.

“Don’t you usually get up by now?” Why is Soap whispering?

Ghost shrugs. His hand lays flat in the small space between them and he thumbs at the rough sheet below.

Soap knows for a fact that Ghost is usually up and gone by now. He’s trying to figure out what this means and what to say about it.

“Why? You kicking me out?” Ghost asks quietly. Soap can’t make out the details of Ghost’s face in this dark, but he can tell that he’s smiling from the tone of his voice.

“No, no,” Soap says, rushes the words out before he can think of a witty comeback. “Come over here, then.” He reaches for Ghost’s face and presses their lips together.

Instantly, Ghost brings a hand under the back of Soap’s shirt and pulls him forward so their bodies meet. God, he is so fucking warm. Soap runs his hand down Ghost’s face, then his neck, then his arm, and down to his lower back. Absent-mindedly, as they kiss, Soap grazes his nails against the soft skin there.

It’s slow, and morning breath be damned, it’s good.

They hum into each other when their clothed cocks rub together. Ghost goes back to using Soap’s hip like a handle to pull as he thrusts forward.

Soap finally caves and brings his hand between them to take Ghost out of his pajama pants and himself from his briefs. It feels like molten when they meet, and when Soap moans, Ghost swallows it out of him.

Ghost’s hand at Soap’s hip slides around and down to push Soap’s underwear down past his ass. Ghost grabs the flesh there and kneads it, groaning. Soap smiles into his lips.

Ghost suddenly takes his hand away and reaches blindly behind him. He pulls his head back from the kiss and brings his hand to his mouth. There’s a click of teeth on plastic and Soap realizes with a rush that Ghost is opening their (*their?!?*) bottle of lube.

He holds the bottle out for Soap to take, which he does. Then, Ghost holds his palm up and open before him. “Is this what you want?”

“Yes,” Soap hisses. *Yes, yes, yes, yes*-. He squirts the clear liquid onto Ghost’s fingers and tosses the bottle away from them like it’s on fire.

Soap isn’t exactly sure how Ghost plans to do this until Ghost says, “Bring your leg up,” and taps his own hip with the back of his wrist. Soap lifts his leg to drape it over Ghost’s

midsection.

The angle brings Soap's cock impossibly closer to Ghost's, but it also makes his boxers ride back up as his legs are effectively spread apart. He ducks his head, feels exposed.

Ghost maneuvers his hand carefully under the back of Soap's boxers. He gets some lube on Soap's cheek on the way, but seems to have no trouble reaching his hole with warm, slick fingers.

Soap whimpers as Ghost presses the pad of his middle finger into the ring of muscle. It sinks in and Ghost slowly fucks Soap with it, incrementally bringing his body closer and inadvertently sliding their cocks together.

Soap wraps his arm around Ghost and keeps his gaze down, watching their cocks make a mess on the sheets. Ghost's arm visibly flexes from the angle and reach and Soap's breath warms the enclosed space where he is crowded against Ghost's chest.

"I got you," Ghost kisses the top of Soap's head when he starts using two fingers.

"I'm ready," Soap whines and clutches the back of Ghost's sleep shirt, "please, I'm ready."

Ghost hums and scissors his fingers, pushes them even deeper. Seemingly satisfied, Ghost pulls away and slides Soap's leg off of him to get up from the bed.

Soap watches the vague outline of Ghost undress, and he suddenly wishes the lights were on. He sits up to take his own shirt off, and before he can get to his boxers, Ghost is at the end of the bed and pulling them off himself.

"Flip over."

Soap does as he's told, taking his pillow into his arms and resting his chin there. Ghost is right on him after, crawling up and trailing kisses across the back of his calves, hands running up higher.

Soap gets no warning before Ghost sinks his teeth into Soap's left ass cheek. "Fucking-" Soap jumps, Ghost laughs and exhales a laugh into the skin there.

Ghost sits up and straddles the back of Soap's thighs before grabbing Soap's ass into his palms and digging into the flesh.

Soap thanks god that the light is off now, because Ghost spreads his ass and spits onto his hole. He immediately brings his fingers there to push the slickness inside of Soap.

"Steamin' *Christ*," Soap buries his face into his pillow as Ghost sinks three fingers inside him.

"Hm," Ghost hums, leaning down to kiss Soap's neck and say, "thought you said you were ready?" He continues dragging his fingers across Soap's prostate and Soap backs into it. When he thrusts forward, his dick drags roughly against the blanket under him and the feeling grazes the line of discomfort.

Ghost sits back up and thrusts his fingers earnestly now, running his left hand across Soap's lower back. Soap sobs into the pillow and feels himself leaking onto the mattress.

Finally, Ghost removes his fingers and slides back so he can grab Soap by the hips and lift him up onto his knees. Soap keeps his face down, feeling extremely naked, painfully shy, and very much like a pillow princess. He may or may not arch his back a little more than necessary.

Ghost comes up behind him and slides his cock against Soap's wet hole. Ghost brings his other hand down to stroke Soap's dick as he starts to push into him.

The sensation sucks the air out of Soap but the pull of his dick grounds him. Ghost sinks deeper and deeper until he's completely inside and they both exhale like they've been holding their breath.

"So fucking good, Johnny," Ghost rubs his thumbs into Soap's hips and pulls him back to press him impossibly closer. He rocks back and forth and takes Soap with him until he doesn't and he starts to slide out slowly.

Soap's legs are trembling, and he impatiently gets up onto his hands to find leverage and push back, sinking Ghost inside him completely again. His head hangs as he gasps and heaves gulping breaths.

Ghost thrusts in and out slowly, building a gradual pace. The room is stuffy and Soap feels boneless and warm all over.

As Ghost begins driving in harder, Soap brings a hand to the iron rod headboard for purchase. His cock is throbbing, slapping against his stomach. The sound in the room makes his chest tighten and he can't help the litany of noises being punched out of him.

"Simon, Simon," Soap chants when Ghost's cock drags back and forth across his prostate. Ghost's breath stutters in response, and he leans forward to take Soap's mohawk in one hand and pull his head back. "Yes- fuck, *Simon*," Soap whines. Something about being in the dark makes the name easier to say.

Soap gets pulled up by his hair, feeling unbalanced on just his knees. But Ghost brings him in close, presses his chest to Soap's back, and weaves an arm around Soap's midsection to hold him there. His other hand steadies Soap by the hip. Soap's hand meets Ghost's there, the other wrapping blindly behind him to claw at whatever skin he can reach as Ghost regains rhythm.

From this angle, Soap can hear, can *feel* the choked off groans in Ghost's throat. He tips his head back all the way to rest it on Ghost's shoulder. He earns a bite to the ear.

"So tight, Johnny," Soap can hear the strain in Ghost's voice. He's so close that the breath of his words tickle Soap's cheek.

Soap licks a strip up Ghost's jaw and replies, "Love your big fucking cock," into his ear.

Ghost's hips stutter and he gasps. "Fuck-" he starts and stops, bringing his hand down Soap's chest to take Soap's cock in his fist. "Want you to come first," he whines, sounding breathless.

It takes no time for Soap to feel his stomach swooping, heat swelling up through his body. He burrows his nose into Ghost's cheek and breathes into the skin there, "So close-"

Ghost turns his face and their mouths meet. The angle is shit, but Soap feels Ghost on every inch of his body and when Ghost moans, Soap can feel it in his teeth.

Soap comes with a gasp -- hunches forward before being caught by Ghost and held tight through his orgasm. Soap clenches around Ghost and presses back into the thrusts with force now. Ghost's fingernails make crescent moons in the skin of Soap's hip when he comes.

As they're getting dressed less than an hour later in the now bright room, Ghost says "You were quiet today." He zips and buttons his pants.

Soap can't find his t-shirt. "Aye, you said that before too." He finds it and looks up to see Ghost idly watching him, waiting for something. Soap wants to turn the light off again. What would he say if it were still dark in here? *Sorry, I was just so consumed with adoration that I could barely breathe let alone banter?*

Instead, he says, "You snore."

For a split second, Ghost's face is unreadable. Then the look is gone and is quickly replaced with a more familiar face: a raised eyebrow and the peek of a grin.

Ghost cocks his head. "You talk in your sleep."

Soap's heard that before and the reminder makes him laugh. He's done it since he was a kid. For the first time, Soap addresses the possibility of him saying something embarrassing in his sleep next to Ghost. New fear unlocked.

When he doesn't reply, Ghost adds, "Should have known you couldn't go eight hours without running your mouth." He pulls his balaclava over his face, but Soap catches his smile before it's covered.

"Eight hours? I fucking wish." Fully dressed now, in the light, Soap feels a bit more safe.

Chapter End Notes

I'm not as proud of this as I wish I was but I am going to post it because I'm ready to write the next chapter and I want to stop staring at this. Thanks so much for reading and I hope you enjoyed!

i'd hold the gun if you asked me to

Chapter Summary

Ghost comes back to base from a solo mission to a recovering, needy, Soap.

Chapter Notes

this may have gotten out of hand

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ghost always feels relief when he's getting back to base after a long mission or trip. He's ready to be back in his routine, he's looking forward to showering regularly, and, well, he misses Soap. He stopped kicking himself for the thought a while ago: it never stopped him from feeling it again.

Soap was injured just before Ghost left: took a bullet to the right shoulder. But he would be fine. Once situated in medical, it felt appropriate to start joking about how Soap had to "make both shoulders match" after what happened in Las Almas.

Ghost hated seeing Soap in that hospital bed. His head pounded at the sight and dread consumed him. He felt weak. He stood by Soap's bed and just stared down at him, in and out of consciousness in the first few days after surgery. He couldn't sleep.

So when Price told the team that Ghost was to infiltrate a compound in a European mountain plain to get information relating to the group who shot Soap, Ghost was able to breathe again. Finally, there was something he could do about this. Soap had complained, obviously, but Ghost promised to make it up to him. In just 10 days, he'd be back and Soap would be out of medical and everything would go back to normal.

10 days later and Ghost is striding to Price's office casting sweeping gazes around base in hopes of seeing Soap among the groups of people. Price better make this quick.

He does, thankfully. They keep it professional, sign what they need to sign, and exchange natural banter. Ghost is about to turn towards the door when Price stops him.

"Actually, there's one other thing, lieutenant."

“Captain,” Ghost says.

Price sighs and his eyes scan the ceiling. “You and MacTavish.” A statement, not a question.

Ghost’s heart may feel like it’s about to come out of his throat, but he presents himself as steely as ever. “Yes sir?”

“You’re close.”

Ghost reluctantly looks into Price’s eyes. Christ, *he knows*. Ghost feels like he has to make a choice but he isn’t even sure what the options are or what he would pick.

He settles on, “We trust each other.”

If Price smirks, Ghost has already looked away. It’s silent.

“Trust is a good thing. Trust keeps us alive.” Price pauses. “We need to trust each other. But we also need rules.”

Ghost swallows the lump in his throat, “I’m aware.”

“But you know how I feel about rules.”

“Just ‘suggestions with a fancy name’, sir.” If Ghost has heard it once, he’s heard it a million times from Price’s lips. Relief doesn’t feel so far away now, but Ghost is still holding his breath.

Price’s brief smile is genuine. “That’s right. And I *suggest* that you consider what this means for the team. Any distraction, any hesitation, can and will cost lives.” His eyes bore into Ghost.

Ghost has always admired Price as a Captain and as a man. “There will be no hesitations, sir.” Ghost wants to feel like this is the truth, but he also doesn’t dwell on the possibility of having to choose between Soap and work. He also pointedly avoids the part about distractions.

“And him?”

Ghost wasn’t expecting that. *I don’t know* is on the corner of his lips. “No, sir.”

Price nods, once. He exhales and crosses his arms over his chest. “I trust you both. Don’t make me regret it.” He looks Ghost up and down once and waves flippantly at him. Ghost recognizes his expression instantly: Frustrated and annoyed? Sure. Actually angry? No. “You’re dismissed.”

“Understood, sir.”

Ghost goes to his room and showers because it's been 10 days without a proper one and he feels like he's made up entirely of dirt at this point.

Maybe he and Soap could have dinner. It's almost 6 and everyone is probably in the mess hall. He wants to know how Soap's wound is healing. He wonders what Soap has been doing this whole time he's been gone.

After a brief wander around base with no sign of any mohawks, Ghost makes his way to Soap's room.

When Ghost knocks on Soap's door, it creaks, then moves. Surprised, Ghost checks and confirms the door wasn't closed all the way. That's unlike Soap, and Ghost would engage more with his growing anxiety if not for the fact that when he opens the door he sees that Soap is completely fine.

He's laying on top of his made bed, head lulled back against the headboard, eyes closed, and snoring quietly out of his half open mouth. On his chest is an open copy of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* under his still hands.

Ghost closes the door quietly behind him, clicks off the overhead light, and takes off his boots at the door. He pads silently over to the desk beside Soap's bed and lifts the chair completely off the ground to pull it out and sit down. He crosses his ankles out in front of him and folds his arms across his chest as he looks at Soap.

Maybe he should go. He suddenly doesn't know why he came in at all once he saw Soap was asleep. But the door was open… Besides, Soap knew he would be coming back, right? He would probably be pissed if he woke up and Ghost was dicking around all over base instead of paying him immediate attention. The thought makes Ghost smile despite himself.

Ghost's chest rises and he heaves a huge exhale from his nose. He slept like shit these last 9 nights, and just sitting here in this warm room is slowing down his heart. He listens to Soap breathe and Ghost can physically feel his body decompressing. Suddenly, he is so, so, tired.

Ghost blinks and startles himself awake. How long had he been asleep? The room feels and looks the same. Soap's still in the same position, but now his book is open and he's awake in between the pages. When Ghost clears his throat, Soap looks over.

"Morning, sleepyhead." Soap dog ears the page he's on and closes the book.

Ghost eyes the obnoxious alarm clock on Soap's side table. It reads 7:32 in blaring red letters. He looks back at Soap. "How are you feeling?" *Tell me you're okay*.

Soap sighs and smiles, shakes his head. "Fine. Normal." He scrubs his hands over his face. He looks tired. "How was your trip?" He asks, as if Ghost was on holiday.

“No issues.” Ghost briefly gives a rundown of the mission. He spent days camping in a forest over the valley where the weapons compound was to do recon. He infiltrated the base slowly, finding a temporary home in a cave on the ground level for the rest of the week or so he was there. He got the information they needed and then some, not to mention planted some remote communication devices to get a steady stream of intel.

“Sounds boring,” Soap says, obviously kidding. The thing is, though, that it *was* kind of boring. It had served its role as a functional distraction.

Ghost smiles to himself when he remembers the story he’s been waiting to tell Soap. “Something pretty funny did happen when I was there.”

Soap perks up at that. His full attention is on Ghost, like he’s been dying for a good story.

“Well,” Ghost sits up in his seat, feeling like Soap deserves a proper retelling after being locked away on base for so long. “The weather and patrol shifts on the compound were unpredictable. Knowing when to move was a guessing game half of the time. Needless to say, I was caught in the rain one night and avoiding bodies more than I would have liked. I quickly ducked into a shed to wait out patrol in the middle of the thunderstorm…” he slows his words. Soap stares back, waiting.

“It was pitch black in the shed but I heard something behind me… So, I flashed my light and turned around-”

“Was it patrol? A civilian?”

“Something far worse…” Ghost pauses for dramatic effect, “A goat.”

Soap’s mouth clicks shut. It opens and closes again. “A goat?” Soap’s eyebrows are raised and his smile is skeptical. The word sounds adorable in his accent.

“It almost bit me, Johnny… would it kill you to have a little empathy?” Ghost scoffs in feign defense.

Soap dies at that, head thrown back to bark a laugh. The sight tightens something in Ghost’s chest.

“This is amazing,” Soap sighs and clutches his stomach as his laughing calms down. “*The Ghost*, taken out by a goat in a storm.”

Ghost would hurt himself to try and tuck his own smile away under his mask.

A comfortable moment of silence spreads between them before Ghost says, “Your door was unlocked. And open.”

Soap furrows his brows at that. “What?”

“I came back and your door was open and you were sleeping at 6 in the afternoon.” They stare at each other. “That’s dangerous.” Ghost is stunned that he has to say something like

this Soap, someone who is as sharp as anyone else if not better. “Wait, what do they have you on?”

“Oxys,” Soap says through a cheeky smile. “Also, you fell asleep too, so someone could have kidnapped both of us.” He flips both palms to the ceiling and shrugs. His eyes look darker in the side lamp light.

Ghost’s chest blooms and he just stares. Soap stares back. Ghost’s heart picks up on something before he does, because it’s thumping obnoxiously in his chest. There’s something in his throat-

“I missed you,” Soap whispers.

Ghost can’t even think of something to say except the truth. “I missed you too,” he says, swallowing.

Soap raises his eyebrows and his cheeks grow through a smile. “Ye did?” He throws his feet off the bed and stands in the space between the bed and the desk chair.

“Don’t push it,” Ghost says, but he’s smiling as he opens his arms, see's where Soap is headed.

Soap straddles Ghost in the armless chair and wraps his arms around Ghost’s shoulders with a wince. Ghost’s hands fly up, but Soap is already shaking his head. “Ahm fine, ahm fine, just haven’t moved it in awhile.”

Soap settles into his position and his fingers fiddle with the hem of the back of Ghost’s mask. When he starts to pull it up, Ghost doesn’t stop him. It comes off and Ghost instinctively runs his hand through his hair before settling it back on Soap’s waist.

With Soap on him at this angle, Ghost tilts his head up a hair to look into Soap’s face looking down at him. He rakes his eyes over the details of Soap’s lips, his nose, his cheeks. Soap appears to do the same. Ghost looks in his eyes to find them roaming around his face, and Ghost feels a familiar itch of discomfort. He sees Soap looking at the scar on his mouth, the one that curls into the crown and tugs his upper lip up slightly.

He’s about to turn away, but Soap leans forward just enough to press a kiss into the scar. It’s chaste, but Ghost aches from the contact.

Ghost sighs through his nose before slipping his eyes closed and wrapping his arms around Soap to hold him tightly. They sink into a firm hug, and Ghost breathes deep into the warm fabric of Soap’s shirt. His hands roam the plane of Soap’s back.

They pull apart and Soap brings his hands to cradle Ghost’s face gently between his palms. Ghost feels warm under Soap’s gaze. Ghost has never felt so seen and the sensation terrifies him.

Ghost slowly brings his hand up Soap’s right arm until it’s under his shoulder. “Does it hurt? Can I see it?”

“S’fine,” Soap murmurs. As if to prove it, Soap leans back and goes to take off his shirt. His eyes pinch closed and halfway through he visibly slows down. Ghost helps him, then it’s gone. “See?” Soap smiles.

Ghost’s eyes immediately train on the wound. The pink, warped skin is still stapled closed, but it looks clean and dry. He looks at the other shoulder- the Las Almas scar. It’s in almost the same spot, but the spread of it is wider from not being treated as fast. Ghost runs a gentle thumb across that one. Soap leans into the touch and their eyes meet.

Soap pulls Ghost’s face up to bring their lips together to kiss him lazily. It’s slow until it’s not, and Soap moans into Ghost, clutches his face tight and slips his tongue into his mouth. Ghost can feel the hard press of Soap’s cock through his jeans. He leans his head back and takes his mouth off Soap’s with a pop.

“We don’t have to do anything, I don’t want to hurt you,” Ghost says, looking at Soap’s shoulder.

“But *I* want you to hurt me,” Soap argues before bringing their faces together again.

“But-” Ghost breathes between kisses.

Soap pulls back and squints. “You promised you’d make it up to me. I am definitely fine. *More* than fine.”

Ghost is not fully convinced, though he wants to be and he’s halfway there. Soap is sitting in his lap, warm and tan and perfect. Ghost clenches and unclenches his jaw before saying, “You have to tell me if it hurts.”

“Deal,” Soap says, leaning down again to kiss Ghost but he gets pushed away with a hand to the chest.

“Take off your pants,” Ghost says, low. Soap’s eyes change and he grins as he stands to strip his jeans away.

He crawls back into Ghost’s lap wearing just his gray boxer briefs. Ghost runs his hands up Soap’s thighs and notices with something not unlike hunger that Soap is hard and there is a darkened spot of fabric where he’s been leaking. He purposely avoids Soap’s groin as his hands travel up the front of Soap’s chest. “So perfect,” Ghost whispers, brain abandoning him to share the thought aloud.

Soap’s head is ducked, watching Ghost’s hands between them. There’s a dark flush already spreading down from his face to his neck, and his chest rises and falls slowly. His fingers, behind Ghost’s head, are playing with the short hairs of his neck.

Ghost runs a firm hand over the bulge of Soap’s underwear. He strokes it slowly through the material, Soap bucks at the contact.

“Have you touched yourself since you got hurt?”

“No,” Soap exhales.

“No?” Ghost taunts, mouth grazing Soap’s temple.

“Was waiting for you,” Soap admits easily. Ghost swoons at that, feels himself throb in his own pants.

“Good boy,” Ghost says, physically feeling the shudder that runs through Soap in his arms.

He pulls Soap’s cock out from his underwear and uses his thumb to spread precum into his grasp to stroke Soap slowly. With his other hand, Ghost holds Soap steady with gentle fingers around his waist.

Ghost watches Soap’s abs and legs flex and he can feel the vibrations of Soap’s moans where his lips are still pressed to his buzzed hairline. It’s actually gotten quite long, Ghost thinks absentmindedly, wondering when the last time Soap shaved it.

Soap thrusts frantically now, huffing hot breaths between their bodies. Ghost knows exactly when to slow down, and then when to stop completely, gripping the base of Soap’s cock in a firm ring. Soap *whines*.

“Poor thing…” Ghost teases, and is rewarded with a low groan from Soap.

“Please,” Soap mutters and brings a hand between them to pull at the waistband of Ghost’s joggers. “Want to feel you, please.”

Ghost is hard as stone and the contact makes his head spin, but he doesn’t want to stop teasing Soap. He wants to edge him forever, make him cry and beg and scream. He also wants to kiss the bridge of his nose and run him a warm bath and hold him until he’s snoring under a fleece blanket.

Soap has started running his own palm over Ghost through his pants, and Ghost grabs his wrist to pull his hand away.

“Come *on*,” Soap lifts his head and looks into Ghost’s face. His cheeks are splotchy red and his pupils are black holes in rings of blue. “Please…” Even with his cock gripped around the base, an occasional drop of precum leaks from the tip.

“Hm?” Ghost looks up at Soap, hoping his face doesn’t expose how far gone he is himself.

“Please.” Soap says flatly, strained. Ghost strokes the length of Soap once firmly before squeezing the base again. Ghost’s eyes still on Soap’s, he revels in the sight of Soap’s eyebrows coming together and his lips parting open. “Please,” it’s quieter this time, and Ghost rewards him with another stroke.

“You look so good, begging like this.”

Soap looks flustered. “I’m gonna kill you, Si, let me touch you.” Then, “*Please*.”

Whether it’s from generosity, mercy, or his own swooping stomach, Ghost releases Soap’s wrist. He adjusts in the seat and pulls his cock from the stretchy waistband of his pants. Soap

reaches for it, and Ghost swats him away. Soap groans, sounding frustrated, but he brings his arm back up around Ghost's shoulder like the other.

Ghost strokes himself once before pulling Soap closer and clumsily bringing their cocks together. The feeling of Soap's cock, warm and wet against his own, has him instantly reeling. He clenches his jaw and takes their cocks together in one grip as best as he can.

Soap rests his forehead against Ghost's and thrusts against him, gasping. Ghost holds him tight, has one hand gripping Soap's hip to keep him there. His other hand tries to slot their cocks together, and they slip out his grasp.

Soap leans in deeper until his chest is flush with Ghost's and his head is tucked into Ghost's neck. When he thrusts now, their cocks are pressed between Soap's bare naval and Ghost's t-shirt.

"Fuck," Ghost slides his own mouth along the skin of Soap's (good) shoulder. He takes his hand out from between them and grabs Soap's ass with both hands under the back of his briefs to pull him on each thrust.

The glossy texture of Ghost's athletic shirt is almost comfortable, and the hard plane of Soap's abdomen is slick with the precum of them both. Ghost feels his stomach dipping, he steadies his breath. "Does that feel good, baby?"

Soap sobs at that. "*Yes*, fuck," he trembles in Ghost's grasp and he rakes his nails across Ghost's shoulder blades. "Fuck, fuck," he whines under Ghost's ear as his thrusts grow desperate.

"Come for me, Johnny." Ghost sinks his teeth into Soap's collarbone.

Soap stills for a second before a long gasp draws from his mouth that twists into a moan. Ghost feels the hot spread of Soap's cum between them and he continues pushing and pulling Soap's languid body against his own.

If he was close before, the slippery warmth around his cock and the lazy kisses Soap is pressing over the shell of his ear send Ghost over the edge moments later.

They sit silently like this for a minute, Ghost sliding his hands slowly up and down Soap's back. He thinks for a second that Soap may have fallen asleep with how even his breathing is, but Soap eventually sits back to look into Ghost's face. He places a kiss to the arch of Ghost's eyebrow with an exaggerated 'smooch' sound before peeling himself away to stand.

Ghost cleans them and changes into an outfit that he's left in Soap's room before. (He left an undershirt here months ago, and when he came back next time it had been washed and folded in an empty drawer of Soap's dresser. Eventually, one undershirt turned into several shirts, a pair of boxers, a pair of pants, and a spare balaclava).

On their walk to the common room in search of something to eat - since they missed dinner - Soap tells Ghost all about *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Ghost makes them peanut butter sandwiches with sides of beef jerky. They sit beside each other on the couch and Soap chats with random people that pass through.

Ghost feels a striking *lack* of discomfort or anxiety. There's a dizzying weightlessness in his feet and hands, and wonders briefly if he should go to medical. Then, when they're alone and Soap leans his head on Ghost's shoulder, Ghost realizes with shock that he is just… happy.

He may have to continue his talk with Price about hesitations and distractions, because Ghost can't think of a single thing he wouldn't kill right now to keep Johnny right here.

Chapter End Notes

inserts obligatory Price lecturing Ghost scene

this is like ~1,000 more words than the other chapters. Let me know if you like that or if it was too much. I haven't started the next chapter but I have an idea of what it will be and it can go either way in terms of length/porn to plot ratio.

As always, thanks so much for reading :) I appreciate all of you! <3

can you read my mind?

Chapter Summary

Soap turns 27 and gets many gifts

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ghost doesn't usually join the rest of the 141 when they go to bars off base - 'the rest of the 141' being Soap and Gaz, because Price rarely comes either. But tonight is special: Soap is turning 27.

Gaz organizes everything, meaning he invites Ghost and Price and then subsequently asks Price if they could take his truck. When Gaz tells Soap this plan over breakfast in the mess hall, Soap perks.

"What did they say?" What he really wants to know is what did *Ghost* say.

"Price was down." Gaz keeps eating. Soap hums.

Finally, Gaz adds, "Ghost said he wouldn't miss it," with an unashamed eye roll. Soap has gotten used to it.

Soap can't help the grin that splits across his face. He's excited enough to make it through 7 hours of gear maintenance. They just got back from a mission yesterday and Soap has an entire, thrilling day ahead of him inspecting sweaty tactical vests and night vision goggles.

Afternoon PT comes and goes. Soap rarely sees Ghost him there anyway. Usually, they meet for dinner or even later if it's a busy day for Ghost. Today must be one of those days, because Soap realizes on his walk to his room after a shower that he hasn't seen Ghost all day.

He feels a bit giddy, and he chews on the inside of his cheek to keep himself from grinning like an idiot in anticipation for the night.

Soap wonders distantly as he opens an (underutilized) dresser drawer reserved for his "fancy" clothes if Ghost got him a birthday gift.

A pang of shame strikes him: Ghost's birthday was a few months ago and Soap didn't get him anything. Well, he got him a box of tea. But it wasn't really a birthday gift - Soap knows how weird Ghost gets about having attention on him.

Things were different back then, anyway. What would Ghost have thought if Soap hand wrote him a card and got him something with emotional -- *vulnerable* -- implications?

Ghost likes more practical things anyway… But fucking tea? Soap sighs to himself and basks in the embarrassment settling in his gut.

Okay, back to the outfit.

Soap slips into his *nice* jeans- no rips or stains in sight. He picks out a navy pullover that fits him well. It's a high quality brand, something his sister got him that he was always afraid to wear.

He kicks himself for being so conscious of what he's gonna wear. It's not like he's trying to impress anyone. Or, impress anyone he hasn't already been trying to impress for what feels like forever. As if Ghost ever cared about brand names anyway.

Part of Soap hopes Ghost didn't get him a gift, but the whole of him knows that he yearns for Ghost to treat him special. He shouldn't be greedy, Soap reminds himself on his walk to their meeting place for the evening.

It's just past sunset and already feeling brisk when Soap steps outside. He's come to like this base in Wisconsin, and the smell of fall rises to his nose. Gaz is propped against the brick wall of the barracks and he waves Soap over excitedly when he sees him.

"The birthday boy!" Gaz daps Soap up with a pop and pulls him into a hug. He saw Gaz not three hours ago at afternoon PT and got the same greeting then, but Soap doesn't mind.

When they pull apart, Gaz draws a hand into his pocket and fishes out two nips of Jameson. He offers one to Soap with raised eyebrows.

"Irish whiskey, but close enough." Soap kids, taking the nip and unscrewing it happily. They nod to each other and take them back, wincing silently and exhaling audibly in the cold air.

"You're lucky I didn't get Fireball."

"Ah'd never forgive ye." Soap wrinkles his nose. They laugh and Soap feels some anxiety leaving his body.

The back door behind them whines open and when Soap turns to look, his teeth creak in his head as he clenches them.

Ghost isn't wearing his full mask, or even a balaclava. Just a medical, paper mask to cover his nose and mouth and a plain black baseball cap over his head. He's got on dark jeans and a worn gray canvas jacket with his hands stuffed in the pockets.

Soap turns his body halfway back to Gaz, playing it cool. He asks Gaz where they're going tonight, and he sighs in relief when Gaz takes his phone out to look up the details.

Ghost steps into their circle, standing close enough for Soap to feel the warmth of him. He lifts a hand and drops it, heavy, on Soap's head.

"Happy Birthday, Johnny," he says, looking down and ruffling his hand through Soap's mohawk.

“Thanks, Lt” Soap instinctively fixes his hair and exhales to steady his breath. They have always done a pretty good job acting normal among the team, Soap thinks. It may be obvious that something is going on, -- and Soap considers himself damned lucky that he has never been confronted yet -- but that doesn’t mean he is gonna go all PDA on Ghost on the tarmac. They’re all so close at this point that casual physical contact is pretty standard, and Soap has always prided himself in being a great actor. Ghost has obviously never had a problem with his poker face.

“So, I was thinking we could hit up Down Range… Unless you fellas wanna go to a place called Hollywood Avenue,” Gaz wiggles his eyebrows. He’s always trying to convince someone to go to a strip club.

“Maybe another time…” Soap offers half-heartedly, saved by the incoming crunch of Price driving up in front of them.

Down Range is a bar not far from base, in a town not unlike all the other small midwest towns where they’re stationed. It’s known to be a hotspot for military patrons, and Gaz jokes that they should really play the part to get some free drinks.

On the drive, Ghost and Soap sit in the full sized cab of Price’s Ford Raptor. It’s a big cab, but it’s still a truck. With a proper manspread, Soap’s knee and extended leg find a comfortable spot in Ghost’s personal space for the ride.

Price is a good driver, and he promises to not get too sloppy so he can drive them all back to base later. When Ghost offers to be designated driver, Soap jokes that he wants to make it back to base alive and that Ghost needs to retake his driving test. The truth is, Soap selfishly wants to see Ghost get a little drunk for once.

The bar doesn’t seem busy from the outside. It’s quite plain, to be honest. Soap loves a good dive bar, and the inside does not disappoint.

This place is old; this place has history. The wood panel walls make the space feel smaller than it already is, and the simple hanging lights cast the space in a yellow light through the dusty glass. Aged, cushioned booths line the walls and there are small gaps of open space between the framed historical photos and boards full of military patches. To their right is a long, oval shaped mahogany bar with intricate wooden columns that reach the ceiling. It almost feels like a pub from back home, Soap thinks.

The place is pretty empty, and the four have no trouble filling the seats. They sit Price, Gaz, Soap, and then Ghost, who wants the furthest seat to the wall, of course. He angles his body so his back is to the wall and he is facing the door, inadvertently facing Soap, too. Soap notes that the stools are not affixed to the floor, good to know.

Before Soap can even breathe a second breath, he hears Gaz ordering a round of shots. Jameson, again.

“Look at this group…” The bartender jokes as she pours the shots. She’s not young but she’s not old; she looks like she’s worked here awhile. “What kind of work do y’all do?” There’s an uncomfortable awkward silence and the woman says, “let me guess - classified?”

This earns a chuckle from them all. “Yes, ma’am,” Price confirms before they all take back the shot.

Soap takes his quickly, watching Ghost from the corner of his eye. Ghost pulls his mask up from the bottom, drains the liquid, and the mask is down again.

“Anything else besides the shots for you gentlemen?” The bartender comes back after getting a drink for someone at the end of the bar.

Again, Gaz is on it: “Johnnie Walker Black neat for us all please.”

“For our boy, Johnny,” Price adds, laughing at his own joke.

“Oi- who’s paying for this?” Fancy shit is for open bar events only, Soap thinks.

“Don’t worry about it,” Price says, lifting in his seat to wave off Soap over the bar and to pull his wallet from his jeans. “Keep it open,” he says to the bartender as he hands over his card.

“Is this a special occasion?” The bartender looks between them all. The Johnnie Walker makes a crack when she breaks through the plastic seal.

“It’s his birthday,” Gaz takes hold of Soap and shakes him for emphasis.

“Happy Birthday!” She sounds genuinely pleased. Probably the most exciting thing this bar’s seen all week.

“Thanks, thanks,” Soap acts sheepish and sips the drink he’s given.

“September fourth…” She wipes her hands on a towel and puts a finger to her chin. “Makes you a… Virgo? Right?”

“Aye,” Soap shrugs. He’s been told that before, though he’s never been entirely sure what it means.

Gaz starts explaining zodiac signs to Price while the bartender comes over to Soap and Ghost’s corner. “Virgos are quite passionate, no?” She looks pointedly at Soap, friendly cougar flirtation. Soap steals a glance at Ghost, whose face seems unchanged in the shadow of his hat. “They’re loyal too, I hear.” She adds with a wink.

“You have no idea,” Ghost says, tone flat. His foot comes over to rest on the support beam at the bottom of Soap’s stool.

“Woof!” The bartender scoffs and laughs it off. “He’s a feisty one isn’t he?”

“Oh, you’ve no idea.” Soap laughs the words out awkwardly. When the bartender turns to answer a customer’s call behind her, Soap faces Ghost. “The fuck was that?” Soap acts

offended, hoping he's masking the beam of joy at Ghost's jealousy.

"What was what?" Ghost lifts his mask, takes a sip, and stares at Soap. Soap stares back, eyebrows raised in expectation.

Ghost's eyes cast past Soap's shoulder in a quick glance, towards Gaz and Price, before returning his gaze. "It's none of her business how passionate you are." He turns his head forward and ducks into his drink again.

Soap feels stunned into silence at that, and he too faces forward to lean his elbows on the bar. He adjusts his feet and settles his heel to rest against the toe of Ghost's boot, solidly planted on the bottom of his chair. Soap is warm all over; he chalks it up to the booze.

They slip into comfortable moments of conversation and silence among the four of them and the drinks keep coming. Gaz convinces the bartender to switch a TV to the English Premier league and they talk Football. They talk shit about the recruits, because how do they keep getting more and more arrogant? Price offers the occasional piece of sage wisdom. Ghost says mostly nothing, but Soap can tell he's having a good time.

Soap blinks and the bar feels fuller. The dad rock music is louder, and the four of them have been pressed closer together with the growing number of people seated and standing around the bar. Soap knows he's drunk because he is *very* interested in the music that's playing, he is much more handsy than usual, and he is convinced he could take up a career in comedy if he had another chance at life.

Santeria is playing and Soap clutches at Gaz so they can both share the imaginary microphone in his hand. When the chorus ends, Gaz gets up to pee and Soap swirls in his stool to face Ghost.

"What's your go-to karaoke song, Lt?"

Ghost quirks an eyebrow and the sight sends a shiver down Soap's spine. Ghost's eyebrows are usually covered by a full mask, and the view of them now in public is borderline pornographic. Soap bites his tongue, half annoyed and half amused at how pathetically into Ghost he is.

"I don't frequent karaoke bars," Ghost says, turning towards Soap so their bent legs slot together.

"I could see you crushing some Limp Bizkit or Korn." Soap squints in thought. "Maybe Nickelback." He instinctively leans in closer.

Ghost's eyes crinkle through a little laugh. "Maybe."

"Personally," Soap doesn't wait for Ghost to ask him back, "I'm going with Billy Joel. Probably Vienna. A real ballad." He nods to himself.

Ghost sips his drink and Soap finishes his- making his fourth, not counting the shots. His eyelids are heavy but he buzzes with a sudden energy..

Gaz comes back from the bathroom and drags Price to the pool table he says he discovered in a back room. Their seats are filled instantly by strangers. Soap watches Price and Gaz go and he brings his knees together to squeeze Ghost's left thigh in between them. They look at each other and Soap smirks.

Ghost took off his jacket at some point, and he's wearing a fitted black t-shirt. It fits him a little too well, and it leaves his arms exposed to the warm pub air. His right hand is on the bar and his left is on his thigh, splayed wide in the space between Soap's legs. Soap tracks his eyes up Ghost's fingers and up the dark forearm tattoo sleeve.

"Love when your tattoo is out," Soap shamelessly reaches his own hand out to touch the ink that wraps around Ghost's elbow. The skin burns him.

Ghost doesn't say anything, just keeps flicking his eyes between the door and Soap. His thumb slides up and down against the smooth glass in his hand on the bar.

Soap feels a dangerous level of confidence. Price and Gaz are gone, this bar is full of people they don't know who all are focused on their own lives, and Soap just wants to crawl into Ghost's lap. He knows he can't, so he fiddles with Ghost's fingers instead.

"So, what did'ya get me for ma birthday?" Soap cocks his head and swivels back and forth.

"You'll see." Ghost lifts his mask to finish his drink and Soap catches the grin he's hiding.

Soap's heart kicks up. "Can I get a hint?"

Ghost nods slowly and hums, crossing his arms over his chest. "In due time…" The tension of his position stretches his shirt taut across his shoulders and arms. Asshole.

Soap sucks his teeth and rolls his eyes. "You're no fun," he lies.

"I am so much fun," Ghost defends himself, though his tone hasn't wavered from its typical coolness.

The bartender comes by to take their glasses and ask if they want another round. Soap considers it, but Ghost turns her away with a "We're all set, thanks."

"Lame," Soap drawls. It's probably a good time to stop though. He's teetering past the line of control and he often feels like sections of time lose themselves behind him. Ghost looks like he's barely drunk a thing, and Soap is determined to find out each of his tells.

"You're drunk."

"Amnae." Soap grounds himself. "Ah'd kill for a bogey though." Nothing quite compares to a drunk cigarette.

“No one needs to die tonight,” Ghost says as he stuffs his hand into his jacket resting on the bar to pull out a pack of Camel Crush Menthols.

“No fucking way.” Soap practically lifts in his seat. “Is this my gift?”

Ghost shakes his head but otherwise ignores him, standing to put on his jacket and head to the door. Soap follows, looking briefly behind him to try and spot Gaz and Price. The bar crowd looks like a dim blur. Soap blinks hard to correct the sight, but doesn’t see the others. They’ll be fine.

The outside air cools Soap’s warm face and he takes a huge breath at the sensation. Some people are gathered in a self-made smoking area under a light post. The parking lot of the bar loops around the side of the building, and Soap and Ghost walk in that direction. It gets darker the further they walk, and Ghost stops to lean against the brick wall once they’re almost completely shrouded in shadows. The voices of the people smoking out front are barely audible now.

Soap watches Ghost rip the plastic from the pack of cigarettes. “Where’d you get those?” Soap had assumed it was an old pack, but it’s clearly brand new.

Ghost shrugs and pulls a cigarette out to hand to Soap. He takes it happily and tucks it between his lips, taking a step closer to Ghost in expectation of a light.

Soap can taste the mint already and he remembers how much he loves Camel Crush. He twists the filter between his forefinger and thumb and feels the hard-soft pearl of poppable extra mint flavor that makes this type of cigarette so unique.

Ghost pulls his mask down under his chin and leans forward with his own cigarette to meet Soap halfway with a lighter flame between them. Soap crosses his eyes to look down at his cigarette as the tip crackles black then red. Ghost steps back and they both silently inhale.

“Christ, that’s good.” Soap leans against the cold brick to stand beside Ghost. He holds the filter to his lips and feels a vibration against his mouth as he pops the mint pod inside. The next pull is extra flavorful. “You don’t usually smoke Camel Crush.”

Ghost keeps his face forward as he says, “No, I don’t.”

Neither of them really smoke, but that’s what everyone in the military says. Soap loves menthols, but Ghost is more of a Marlboro man if given the choice. The thought of a colorful green pack of Soap’s favorite cigarettes in Ghost’s jacket pocket makes him lightheaded, and he takes a step closer in the dark so their arms are pressed together. The warmth of it instantly draws him in.

Ghost looks down and over at Soap. “Did you have a good birthday?”

“Aye. It’s not over yet, though” Soap looks up at Ghost’s face, completely exposed but hidden in shadows. “You didn’t say anything about my sweater.” Soap watches the whites of Ghost's eyes move as he looks him up and down. “It’s new. Kinda. Never worn it.”

Ghost reaches his free hand up to gently take hold of Soap's elbow. His fingers wrap around to press into Soap's inner forearm. "It's nice. Soft." He rubs his palm up the sweater arm and stops on Soap's shoulder to squeeze the muscle there before sliding the pad of his thumb into the notch of Soap's clavicle. His hand is cold, and Soap feels goosebumps across his flesh as Ghost wraps his forefingers around the back of his neck.

Soap doesn't move. He looks into Ghost's face and realizes there's nothing Ghost could say right now that Soap would say no to. He'd get on his knees on this concrete sidewalk in one second and Soap stares into Ghost's face like he is waiting for the word.

Ghost's eyes track from Soap's eyes to his lips, and then where his fingers are around Soap's throat. He doesn't squeeze, but his hand feels heavier and Soap feels his pulse rush to his ears. Soap's mouth falls open and he exhales a steady breath.

Ghost's hand slides up so his forefingers frame Soap's jaw and his thumb rests at the seam of Soap's mouth. Soap instantly opens his lips to take the finger in between them. He watches Ghost's jaw clench, eyes narrowing as he pulls his thumb down to pull on Soap's bottom lip before taking his hand away completely.

"You're killing me," Ghost says, turning to face the parking lot and pulling from his cigarette. Soap does the same.

Soap wonders if he should be offended, but part of him understands the feeling. The ache of wanting so much makes his heart *hurt*. The fear of wanting keeps him awake with nausea. He often feels like he doesn't know how much more of this he can take. Is that how Ghost feels, too? "Not my intention, sir."

"Liar," Ghost smiles down at Soap and tosses his cigarette to the ground before stomping it under his boot.

"Soap? Ghost?" Gaz's voice calls from the front of the bar.

Ghost pulls his mask up to cover his nose and he says, "Come to my room when we get back to base for your birthday gift," before passing Soap and leaving the privacy of their shadow. Soap follows behind, sucking his cigarette down like his life depends on it.

Price and Gaz don't make any jokes about how Soap and Ghost went missing. They bicker about the rules of 8-ball and Price ends the argument with the reminder that he paid the bill and is driving them home.

When they pull back up to base, the banter thins as they go their separate ways. Soap can feel Ghost behind him and Gaz as they walk through the narrow hall of the sleeping barracks.

They reach Soap and Gaz's rooms, side by side. Ghost walks past them both as they reach for their keys. Soap looks after him from the corner of his eye. Ghost doesn't turn back.

“Goodnight, boys,” Gaz unlocks the door and he looks down the hall at Ghost before turning his gaze to Soap. “Happy Birthday, Soap,” he whispers, and winks before ducking into his room.

“Night, Gaz.” Soap opens his own door and steps into his dark room without completely closing the door. When he hears the click of Gaz’s lock, he slides out of the cracked door and closes it behind him as quietly as possible.

Soap takes his time walking to Ghost’s room, feeling less like a teenager sneaking out than he used to. This feels routine, and that train of thought usually sends him reeling with anxiety, but his current buzz helps to quell that. He’s still stricken with a dizzying level of confidence, and the tension from the night feels like it’s coming to a head. Soap doesn’t even care if this kills him, anymore.

When Soap gets to Ghost’s room, he blinks and steadies himself. As usual, he doesn’t need to knock. Ghost opens the door and steps back to let Soap in.

He’s still in his t-shirt and jeans, but his boots and cap are gone. When the door closes, Ghost pulls the paper mask off and Soap is already on top of him.

He pushes Ghost into the wall and grabs his face to crush their mouths together. Ghost moans in surprise, sliding his hands under the back of Soap’s sweater to pull him closer.

“Want you so bad,” Soap says into the crook of Ghost’s neck. He bites under his ear and sucks a bruise into the skin there. He places an open mouthed kiss to Ghost’s earlobe before taking it between his teeth, eliciting a hiss.

Soap is already throbbing in his pants, and Ghost’s hands on the back of his neck and head make his skin blaze. He’s rolling his hips against Ghost’s, desperate. Soap can feel the hard line of Ghost’s cock against his navel and he groans.

Ghost pulls Soap’s face to his and slides their lips together again. Soap tastes menthol when he glides his tongue against Ghost’s. He licks into his mouth, feels the hard curve of his teeth, and chomps into Ghost’s lower lip. He can’t eat him alive but he can damn well try.

“It’s my birthday and I want you naked,” Soap demands, stepping back to pull his sweater off.

“Yes sir,” Ghost says through a smile. His lips are plush and pink, wet as Ghost runs his tongue across them.

Soap toes his sneakers off and unbuckles his belt to take his jeans off, watching Ghost do the same. He pulls off his t-shirt and Soap rakes his eyes over the layers of rippling muscles across his huge midsection as it becomes visible.

Ghost tucks his fingers under the waistband of his boxer briefs and Soap stops him from pulling them down, stepping in close and dropping to his knees. He parts his lips and drags his mouth over Ghost’s cock through the warm fabric. Soap brings a hand down to squeeze his own cock through his underwear, already feeling lightheaded and flushed all over.

Soap raises both hands to yank down Ghost's briefs enough to pull his cock and balls out. Soap immediately draws the leaking tip of it into his mouth. Ghost moans, dropping a hand onto Soap's head and carding his fingers slowly through his mohawk.

Ghost's cock is heavy on Soap's tongue and it fills his mouth so perfectly. His eyes slip closed and he bobs his head to suck the first few inches, feeling a sense of relief to finally have him somewhere inside of him.

Opening his jaw, Soap takes the whole length of Ghost into his mouth and when the tip bumps the back of Soap's throat, his mouth floods with saliva. He pulls off with a gasp and takes Ghost's slippery cock into his fist as he laps away a bead of precum.

"Jesus Christ," Ghost's voice is low and Soap takes a measured breath before he looks up. He meets Ghost's gaze, pupils huge, and Ghost keeps him there as he says, "So perfect for me, Johnny. So good."

The praise swirls in Soap's gut and his face burns like he's facing a fire. The words repeat in his mind as he takes Ghost into his mouth again and hollows his cheeks. He uses his hand wrapped around the base to move with his mouth so he can cover Ghost's entire cock in wet warmth.

"Fuck," Soap hears Ghost thud the back of his head against the wall and feels Ghost's hand tighten where it clutches his mohawk. "Johnny, baby," Ghost's voice is strained and quiet, "*baby*-." He gently goes to push Soap away from him in warning.

Soap beams with pride knowing Ghost is close. He throbs in Soap's mouth and Soap has to will himself to pull away instead of finishing him right there across his face.

Soap pulls off with a wet groan and clears his throat. He stands up and he's not even on his feet for a second before Ghost's tongue is in his mouth, licking into him roughly.

"You drive me fucking crazy," Ghost says, almost sounding angry.

Soap smiles against Ghost's lips. "Likewise."

Ghost bends to hoist Soap up by the back of his thighs. Soap stutters but quickly finds stability with his arms wrapped around Ghost's neck as he is carried across the room. Always good to be humbly reminded that Ghost can manhandle him like he's not a full grown man himself.

Ghost walks them the short distance to his desk, already cleared, and he drops Soap there. Soap's lower back is cold where it's pressed into the particle board. His ass just hangs off and he wraps his legs behind Ghost, locking his ankles together to keep him steady.

Ghost's hands map the surfaces of Soap's thighs, slotting his body between them to lean down and bring his mouth back to Soap's. Their dog tags clank together and Soap grabs Ghost's chain to pull him closer. Ghost's bare cock rubs against Soap's clothed one, and they gasp into each other. Soap presses the crown of his head into the wall behind him when Ghost takes a nipple between his teeth.

When Ghost stands, he pulls Soap's briefs off and opens the drawer under his ass to retrieve a bottle of lube. Before putting some in his hand, he positions the bottle over Soap's exposed cock and drips lube onto it. It's cold, and Soap gasps as it trails down his balls and between his ass cheeks. He tenses his legs, drawing Ghost closer. Ghost's cock rests wetly beside Soap's, pressed beside Soap's inner thigh.

Ghost palms Soap's cock, slathering the lube across its surface before taking him in his fist and stroking him. His other hand goes down and Soap feels a slick digit against his hole. Ghost twists his wrist as he jerks Soap off, effectively distracting him from the burn of sliding his finger into him.

"Fuck," Soap drapes one arm over his face and grips the edge of the desk with his free hand. Soap can't help but thrust into the wet heat of Ghost's fist. The motion leads him to fucking back onto Ghost's finger too, and the sensation has him shaking.

Ghost replaces one finger with two, scissoring them and meeting Soap at each thrust. "Oh my god-" Soap whines into the crook of his elbow. "Stop, I'm gonna come," he pleads, but he doesn't stop himself from fucking Ghost's fist.

Immediately, Ghost takes his hand away and wipes it on his thigh before using it to hoist Soap's leg over his shoulder. The stretch burns Soap's hamstring and Ghost's now three fingers inside of him feel even deeper.

Ghost spends another minute fucking Soap with his fingers before pulling them out and slicking his cock with more lube. He uses one hand to hoist Soap's other ankle over his shoulder and uses the other to line up his cock and press into Soap slowly.

Soap braces himself, feels the air leave his chest as Ghost sinks in. "Fuck-" His eyes squeeze shut and he feels Ghost's hands come around to hold his hips and rub his thumbs into the bones and muscles there.

Ghost groans when he pulls out slightly, then drives back in so their bodies are flush together. Soap watches Ghost's chest bloom with flush as he takes labored breaths. He's looking down, where their bodies are joined, and Soap itches with embarrassment that bleeds into arousal.

Slowly, Ghost builds a gentle rhythm that has Soap moaning as his prostate is grazed over and over. Soap plants his palms against the wall behind him and pushes down to meet Ghost's thrusts. He forces him to go deeper, faster, until the room is filled with the sounds of them both gasping and their bodies slapping together.

"Feels so good," Soap cries, looking down to watch his cock drool across his folded abdomen. He can't catch his breath, his arms are strained from pushing against the wall.

"Touch yourself," Ghost sounds wrecked too, and just the sound of his voice in such an order makes Soap groan. He brings a hand to his cock and it throbs at his touch.

Soap's gut swoops. "Fuck, oh my god- Simon, fuck, *fuck*" The words just fall out of him and he chases after them, panting. The momentum of Ghost fucking him sends his cock through

his fist and he's a fucking goner. He comes over his chest with a whine and clenches around Ghost.

Soap watches Ghost's face closely as he comes. He goes from clenched jaw to slightly parted lips, and his eyes flutter closed. He's silent at first, stilling for a second before groaning and squeezing Soap's hips firmly in place.

Promptly upon getting cleaned up and putting on underwear, Ghost and Soap plop side by side in bed. The light is still on, and they both just stare at the ceiling from where they're laying on their backs.

"Listen here, Riley." Soap dramatically turns his head to face Ghost, "I don't know how flexible *you think* I am-"

Ghost outright laughs, scrubbing his hands down his face before turning his cheek to his pillow to look into Soap's face. "I thought it went pretty well." He smiles almost shyly. Soap can see his freckles this close, and can map out the varying shades of white and pink where scar tissue meets new, smooth skin on Ghost's face.

Ghost won't keep Soap's eye, keeps darting his gaze past Soap's shoulder or noncommittally down between them. He opens his mouth and closes it, then shuts his eyes and sighs like he's annoyed with himself. Suddenly, he gets up from the bed.

"You want your gift?" He looks down at Soap and motions for him to sit up. Ghost visibly eases up, puts on a tone that only Soap could recognize as poorly hidden bashfulness.

Soap kinda thought that the sex *was* the gift. "No-" He starts, "no, I can't accept it."

Ghost's hand on the top drawer of his dresser stills. He waits, face blank.

"I didn't get you a gift for your birthday and I feel terrible about it."

Ghost furrows his brow and squints in genuine looking confusion. "You got me tea." He says it plainly, stating a fact.

"That doesn't count."

"I like that tea." Ghost defends, simply. He opens the drawer.

Soap just gapes back at him, defeated. When Ghost joins him on the bed, Soap sits up higher to lean against the wall. Ghost sits on the edge of the bed beside Soap's feet, facing him. He reveals a box and hands it over, looking down and splaying his palms across his knees.

The shape of the box immediately throws Soap off. It's a metal hexagon, hefty in his hand.

"Didn't wrap it." Ghost adds. As he says it, Soap reads the packaging designed directly on the tin cover. He swallows the lump in his throat and pulls the lid off to confirm his suspicions.

It's a matte black G-Shock watch made with bulky, firm rubber and adorned with reflective details. The clicking hands glow red. The room is silent as Soap's eyes look over it again and again.

Ghost clears his throat before saying, "Your old watch was a damn hazard. I should have gotten you one sooner."

Soap grins. Ghost was right. That thing was a piece of junk. Soap had used it for months after the first arm broke, but eventually, dirt and mud caked into the cracks of the plastic face. He threw it out a few weeks ago.

"It's… really fucking nice." Soap laughs and starts to pull it out of the packaging. He wraps it around his wrist, adjusts it, and holds his hand out to get a view of it on. "I like the red," he looks into Ghost's face. "Thank you… I don't know what to say. This is… a lot." Soap can't remember the last time he got a gift so nice.

"If I overstepped…" Ghost says in a whisper, so quietly as if to give Soap the opportunity to ignore it, like he didn't hear it at all.

Soap's heart pounds in his chest. He shakes his head slowly. "No." Soap keeps Ghost's gaze, wants to just say things telepathically so he doesn't have to say them out loud. "No… No." He closes his mouth dumbly. Deep breath, "You didn't overstep."

Ghost stares back like he is trying to receive the telepathic message, or like he's trying to send one of his own.

Words are hard. Soap wracks his brain for a joke but comes up empty. "I love it." He ends up saying, "I love…" he nods, "the watch." Soap raises his eyebrows and tries to come to terms with what he just said and how he said it.

Once a tight line, Ghost's lips stretch into a small smile. "Okay. Good."

They spend another minute looking at the watch details. "It's a timer, stopwatch, calendar…" Soap reads from the little manual briefly before dropping it on the side table and laying down to settle under the blanket. Ghost gets up to turn off the light before crawling into bed behind Soap.

He curls Soap up, heating his back instantly. Ghost's breath brushes the back of Soap's neck and he thinks he may already be half asleep.

"Happy Birthday, Johnny."

Soap just moans an affirmative, friendly-inflected noise. He has no energy to actually open his mouth right now. His eyelids are painfully heavy. Which is more exhausting: a night of drinking or poorly displayed emotional vulnerability?

"I love…" Ghost whispers the words in the same tone that Soap used earlier, "the tea." Soap can hear him swallow. "The tea that you gave me."

Soap knows what he heard, but part of him is afraid he may already be dreaming. Maybe telepathy is real.

Chapter End Notes

Okay. I'm sorry this took SO long to come out. But! Look what has somehow naturally happened- today is literally Soap's bday! It kinda worked out. Happy Birthday, Soap <3

I really hope that you guys like this and can forgive me for being kinda late. My semester started along with my internship and job, so I am busy! But I am already plotting the next (final...? :( ) chapter. I have no idea when it will come out but I promise I will never give up on this fic. Thank you everyone for all the love, support, kudos, comments, subscriptions, etc. I appreciate all of you!

(I once had a manager who was kinda intimidating in a sort of hot-scary way and she smoked Camel Crushes which I thought was so charming)

i've loved before, i'll kill again

Chapter Summary

+1, Ghost pov

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ghost should probably break things off with Soap.

This thought crosses his mind occasionally, but it's always, without fail, followed by all consuming dread. Dread, confusion, frustration… Ghost has engaged in more emotional labor in the past year than he ever has in his whole life.

Soap started out like a bad habit. There were lapses in judgment that may or may not have been guided by the unavoidable chemistry between the two of them. But Ghost consistently told himself that things were still in his control, that they could stop at any time and that the both of them would be just fine.

Then, somewhere along the way, Soap became an integral part of Ghost's daily routine. Sex became sleepovers and sharing clothes and then Ghost blinked and he realized Soap somehow entwined into his entire being without him noticing.

On good days, Ghost tells himself he is allowed to be happy. This is a common Soap-ism; always telling Ghost that he *"deserves"* nice things and that he should be *"kind"* to himself. Soap is selfish in a good way, he views life as something that can be enjoyed, not just endured. Misery actually doesn't make you stronger, which is weird for Ghost to grasp. But it's true: Ghost sleeps better in a warm bed and he works harder because he has Soap now. Fighting for your life is, frustratingly, easier to do when there is something to live for.

On bad days, Ghost hates himself. He knows Soap deserves better, Soap deserves the world. He knows what happens when you're weak and distracted and vulnerable. People die. And then what? What happens when Soap dies? Worse, what happens when Soap dies and it's Ghost's *fault*?

Unfortunately, Soap is not an idiot. Ghost has literally built an identity around being stone cold and impossible to read but Soap tears through it like it's a paper towel. He reads Ghost like a book, has been able to read him before they even started whatever the hell they have now.

Ghost knew he was compromised -- knew that Soap had *seen* him -- one night after a mission.

Soap had barely been on the 141 for more than a month after Hassan before they were heading back to Mexico to support Los Vaqueros in taking down a cartel drug factory. Los Vaqueros had been on their tail for a while, and just needed body support for one especially infamous compound.

The place was a minefield of chemical barrels and the distinct smell of acrid melting plastic permeated through their masks. Soap and Ghost filed down the hallway ahead of the others, going door by door and room by room taking out cartel members.

Soap put his shoulder through a door and it slammed open to reveal a man and woman in a makeshift office. The desk was littered with papers and disorganized paraphernalia. Amongst the mess, next to an amber glass ashtray, was a pistol. The man grabbed the gun with an efficiency that clearly displayed years of experience but Ghost shot him quickly. He aimed at the woman next, but her arms were raised high above her head and her chin was tucked into her chest..

She wasn't a woman, Ghost registered. Her huge, heaving sobs had the tone of a child, and she was no more than 100 pounds. She couldn't have been older than 13.

Soap and Ghost lowered their guns as Alejandro filled the space beside them in the doorway. It seemed that together, they all realized at once what they had walked into. Her arms were covered in bruises, and when she occasionally peeked up at the men, Ghost saw her face was purple with welts and split skin. She had already been crying long before they came in.

Alejandro ran forward, shouting in spanish. Ghost didn't know spanish, but he knew when a hand wave was telling him to fucking get the hell out. He and Soap promptly left and made room for several other Los Vaqueros to fill the space they were taking up in the room. Ghost would be lying if he said he didn't look back at the man's body on the floor to feel a rush of satisfaction.

On the helo back to base, Gaz was Gaz. "I heard about that civilian, a kid, all fucked up from her dad," he said. No one replied. He added. "Motherfucker got what was coming to him." Soap, sitting across from Ghost, nodded idly at that, eyes on the floor.

It was quiet after that, until Gaz spoke again. "Who ended up shooting him-"

"Enough." Ghost snapped his gaze in the direction of Gaz, sitting beside him. That shut him up.

When Ghost looked forward again, his stare settled on Soap. He was staring back at Ghost. Worse, he didn't turn away when Ghost's eyes caught him there. He just looked back, shamelessly.

Ghost wasn't used to people openly staring at him unless they were asserting power or testing him somehow. As annoying as Soap was sometimes, this was not that type of look. Pity, disgust? Ghost wasn't sure, but something about the moment made him feel exposed and he knew all at once that Soap was going to be trouble for him.

He would soon come to know that Soap was staring at him in that moment with something closer to care. And he would soon see that look quite a lot.

Soap looked away first, readjusting his head completely to rest it against the wall behind him. His eyes, cast to the ceiling, dropped closed for the rest of the ride.

Now, sitting at his desk with his head in his hands, Ghost lets the memory pass him by. It's quickly replaced by more important thoughts.

The base is alive with need as tensions escalate with foreign threats. Ghost has been spending more time in the administration wing with Price than he has been anywhere else on base. There are intelligence officers to meet with, intel and maps to scour through, new base drills to implement, and specialized equipment to prepare.

It's just past midnight now and he's been at it since three this morning. Last night he got maybe one or two hours of actual sleep.

The night before was worse. He hadn't slept at all; he was throttled awake by a night terror, one similar to the one he had the night before that too. Two in one week was a little disappointing considering Ghost had started to think they were becoming a thing of the past. But still, he was no stranger to them, and they almost served as a healthy reminder that being broken is his baseline, inevitable.

There is something comforting in the emptiness, and Ghost can't resist clinging to the familiar sensation he's been stuck in. Running on empty is what he's *good* at. This is what he's used to.

Ghost has barely seen Soap.

Price and other ranking officers held a meeting at the beginning of the week to implement and plan the new base drills for all base personnel. There were new base drills for combat members, and perimeter drills for security. Everyone had work to do.

Ghost and Soap made good work of appearing casual among the chatter of 20 people as they filed out of the conference room. Once most of the room was emptied, Ghost and Soap naturally walked alongside each other on exit. They staggered behind and walked slowly down the hall as the people dispersed.

"Sounds like you've got some work to do, Lt."

"We all do, Sergeant," Ghost said, though he didn't know back then the extent of stress he was about to face.

Soap walked so close to Ghost that their jacket sleeves rubbed together with each step, but he leaned in even closer to privately say, "Ahm here if you need me."

Ghost looked over and was met with just the tail end of a side eye from Soap as he continued forward with a smile.

Before Ghost could really unpack the offer, they came to an intersection in the hall and Soap beared right. He drew his hand up to slide it across Ghost's upper back as he split away. "See ya Lt," Soap called behind him.

Since then, most interactions have been in passing. Ghost hasn't been to PT. He eats most of his meals alone in his office or silently with Price in his.

Ghost sometimes wonders if Soap is mad at him for not being around lately, but Soap always smiles and waves when he catches Ghost's eye. He seems as happy as ever. Ghost eases with this confirmation that Soap will continue life just fine without Ghost.

Ghost's eyes are heavy as they scan across the same satellite images he's been staring at for an hour. His desk seems so small now; there's not enough room to lay everything out and the small lamp light does little to help.

There's a knock at the door and Ghost straightens. "Yeah," Ghost mumbles, knowing it can only be Price at this hour.

Sure enough, Price steps in slowly. He looks exhausted too, and he sighs when he catches sight of Ghost. "Go the fuck to bed, Lieutenant."

Ghost shakes his head. "Can't, sir. Work to do." He doesn't add that he also, literally, can't sleep.

Price stands before Ghost's desk and looks down at the glossy papers atop it. He moves one to the side to look at one underneath, nodding to himself. "I have news that might make you feel better."

Ghost looks up and waits for him to continue, expectations low as usual.

"Got some intel from our friends at MI6. Encrypted comms, location, convoy of supplies with a date and time. All points to the same spot."

Ghost hums. "Okay." He nods, feeling slightly more energized with the news. "What now?"

Price chuckles and shakes his head. "*Now,* you go to sleep so we can make a plan in the morning."

"We don't have time to wait-" Ghost notes his irritation and tries to suppress his sour mood.

"It's an order, Simon." Price hardens. "We can wait until tomorrow. I know damn well you're not getting any good work done in the shape you're in," he flips his hand up in an exasperated motion towards Ghost. Ghost can't argue with that, he knows Price is right.

Before the Captain walks out, he turns one last time to say, “And when this is all over, you’re getting a proper break,” with an offensive point jutting in Ghost’s direction. He closes the door before Ghost can dispute.

Ghost organizes the disaster of papers in front of him in such a way that they can make sense to him when he comes back tomorrow. He fiddles with a stack of files in the corner of his desk, all related to this project. Maybe he should skim through them again, just to pick out things he will want close by when they meet tomorrow.

His head throbs, reminding him of Price’s order.

He just really, really, does not want to face his prison cell of a bedroom right now. He knows he won’t sleep, he knows he will be wracked with nightmares and flashbacks. He knows he will arise tomorrow in the same state he’s in right now. This is a waste of time.

In a daze, Ghost makes it out of his office and locks the door behind him. Most of the offices around him are empty, but there is still a good deal of well-lit spaces and buzzing electronics. The bright overhead ceiling lights and lack of windows create the illusion of daytime, and when Ghost leaves the building to go outside, the sight of nighttime is unnerving to step into.

It’s cold in early November. Ghost settles into the chill as he walks slowly across base to the barracks. The buildings look like they’re sleeping, no bugs are chirping, and Ghost can’t help but feel like the night is mocking him.

Stepping into the barracks, Ghost’s feet move without conscious thought. He is heading towards his room, but he stops in front of Soap’s. He stands there, head empty.

I’m here if you need me, Soap had said. But what if Ghost has nothing to give back? All he does is take and take. He’s so selfish. He can’t do anything right and it’s no wonder nobody ever loved him-

He knocks.

After a moment, there is the sound of movement behind the hollow door and it opens before him.

Soap immediately squints, closing one eye completely as he faces the dim hallway light. He blinks, rubs his eye open, and looks at Ghost. He’s shirtless, and his black sweatpants sit low on his hips. Ghost realizes, heart stopping, that the sweatpants are a pair of his own.

“You okay?” Is the first thing Soap says, looking slightly more awake already.

“I-” Ghost clears his throat. “You said to, if I… needed you.” Ghost exhales, struggling with complete sentences and feeling weirdly embarrassed.

Soap’s eyebrows raise slightly in recognition, and his face softens. He nods, looking around and into the hall. “Do you want to come in, or… Or go for a walk or something?”

“Walk is good,” Ghost nods. Anxiety he didn’t know he was grasping starts to slowly slip off of him.

Soap turns on the light and opens the door wider to let Ghost step in. Ghost doesn't close it all the way behind him, watching as Soap turns to bend down and pick a hoodie up off the ground. Ghost stares at Soap's lower back dimples in the well-lit room, imagining how soft his sleep-warm skin must feel.

"It's cold outside." Ghost warns when he sees Soap has committed to just a hoodie.

Soap hums in affirmation, grabbing a coat to layer over his hoodie before following Ghost out of his room. As they step outside, Soap flips the hood over his head and draws the strings together slightly, shielding his head from the wind chill.

Wordlessly, the two make their way to the track. The field lights are off at this hour, but street lights and the huge early winter moon make the wide open area bright enough. Thankfully, no one else had the same idea as them. They swing open the creaking metal fence and walk immediately into two lanes to round the track

A minute into their walk, Soap finally speaks. "How's work going? You've been busy."

"I don't wanna talk about work," Ghost replies, surprising himself with how cold he sounds.

"Oh, okay." Soap nods, and they slip into a comfortable silence.

Soap yawns as they round the track, stepping into a darker part of the field where the far lights don't quite reach. Ghost takes deep breaths through his balaclava, feeling lighter with each step. Just being here with Soap makes him breathe a little easier, makes his head ache a little less. He hates it so much.

"Are you okay, Simon?" Soap seems resistant to ask.

Ghost tries his best to be honest, he did wake up Soap and drag him out here, after all. "Just been in my head."

"You tend to do that," Soap says, smiling over at Ghost.

Ghost hums. "I'm tired."

"You look tired." Soap confirms, voice not unkind. "You've barely slept, I can tell."

Ghost feels naked under the sweet, validating words. This is exactly why he shouldn't have come here, shouldn't have done this at all.

Soap continues. "Have you been eating anything? Haven't seen you in the mess hall."

Stop caring about me, Ghost wants to say. His blood itches under his skin. He can't open his mouth to speak.

"We don't have to talk," Soap offers when he gets no reply. "Just worried about you," he adds, quietly.

"Don't be," Ghost says, firm and quick.

Soap sighs. “As if I could help it.”

“You could. And you should.” Ghost feels frustration building in his chest, a lump forming in his throat.

Soap slows in his steps, looking over at Ghost as he walks. “No, I can’t.” He sounds angry too, and Ghost isn’t sure if he was expecting this. “If this is some stupid pride thing yer doing to protect me or something, I won’t have it.”

Ghost doesn’t say anything, just keeps walking, eyes cast down. He can practically feel Soap fuming beside him. He shouldn’t have woken him up.

Soap continues without a reply. “You think I want to feel like this? So fucking vulnerable? You don’t think I’d give everything to *not* worry about you so much?” He scoffs. Ghost is familiar with the feeling he’s describing.

Why? How?, Ghost wants to ask. “I can’t give you what you deserve.” Ghost says plainly, as emotionless as he is capable. He feels like this sentence sums up everything wrong with him and why he can’t do this with Soap anymore. Ghost wasn’t really planning on doing this tonight, but if it’s easier this way, so be it.

Soap stops walking. They’re halfway down the length of the track. Ghost stops too, turning around to face him.

“What are you talking about?” Soap’s eyebrows are bunched together and his shoulders are slouched, hands stuffed deep into his jacket pockets. He doesn’t look angry anymore, he looks hurt. Ghost wants to cross the step between them and tuck Soap into his arms. He’s making this so hard.

“I don’t want to hurt you.”

“Haud yer wheesht,” Soap spits, jaw tight.

Ghost takes half a step closer. “I’m not a good person, Johnny. You… You deserve so much more-”

“Stop saying that!” Soap steps back, eyes wide in shock.

Ghost feels sick to his stomach, how could he do this, this is the last thing he wanted, what has he done, what is wrong with him-

“Yer exactly what I deserve,” Soap adds firmly, staring through Ghost like he does. He looks at him almost like he’s seeing something new, realizing something. “You protect me, you think about me.” He raises an eyebrow, like he’s waiting to be interrupted. Ghost says nothing. “You are kind to me,” Soap continues, voice building like he’s insulting Ghost, “you care about me.”

Ghost is reeling on his feet. Somehow, it sounds less scary when it comes from Soap’s mouth instead of his own.

Soap steps in, close, and looks up defiantly into Ghost's face as he stabs a pointer finger into Ghost's chest. "You *love* me." Soap's mouth clicks shut at that, appearing scorn as he stares into Ghost.

Ghost's heart hammers in his chest. His hands clench and unclench in his own jacket pockets as he stares down into Soap's face. Creeping shame consumes him, and Ghost feels stark naked.

Soap's face falls, and he seems to get angrier, "You've already told me a million times even if ye haven't *said* it, so it's too late for this tough guy game- I know that you're scared but-" There's a desperate edge in his voice.

Ghost turns at that, attempting to flee down the track, but Soap grabs his wrist. "Tell me I'm wrong."

Ghost pulls away and keeps his back to Soap, hoping to materialize into one of the buildings in his sights. God, he's such an idiot. His face burns under his mask and he takes deep breaths like he's just ran a mile.

"It's something else." Soap stays a foot behind Ghost, voice quieter now. "You think I don't love *you*," he says slowly, scoffing as if in disbelief.

"Stop, Johnny," Ghost shakes his head, releasing a huge sigh and finally walking away. Soap is right behind him.

"That's it, isn't it," Soap says as he bounds over to walk by Ghost's side, sounding like he's confirmed that he's right. Ghost is furious that he is.

Ghost doesn't say anything, he's almost at the gate. Soap speeds up, stepping right in front of Ghost and planting a palm against his chest to stop him in his place.

"No matter how unlovable ye try to make yourself, I am not going anywhere." Soap says, eyebrows raised.

Ghost is frozen, fighting every single urge in his body to fight or run or hide. He's tried so hard, for so long, to prevent something like this from happening. And for good reason. It feels horrible, he feels like a child.

"If you really want me gone," Soap says slowly, "then you have to tell me that. But if this is because you think you don't 'deserve me' or that you don't wanna 'hurt me', I don't want to hear it ye bastard." His gaze is so intense, and Ghost sees in his eyes that Soap is scared too.

Ghost shakes his head once, slowly. "I don't want you gone," he can barely hear the words as they leave his mouth.

Soap sighs and tension visibly leaves his body as he pulls Ghost into a tight hug.

Ghost wraps his arms around Soap and feels his own muscles release. He closes his eyes, rests his chin on top of Soap's hooded head, and breathes. Soap is warm in his grasp, and

Ghost reminds himself that they're the same people they were two minutes ago. The world, in fact, did not end.

When they pull apart, Soap briefly checks left and right before tucking his thumbs under Ghost's mask. He stops, looks for approval in Ghost's eyes, and Ghost gives it to him by moving Soap's hands and lifting the mask himself. The bunched hem rests on the bridge of his nose.

The wind bites at Ghost's exposed skin, and Soap's lips across his cheek are cold to the touch. Soap brings his mouth to Ghost's and he leans into the kiss. It's a lot easier to communicate this way, and Ghost grabs Soap's face in his hands to press them together painfully, silently confirming Soap's accusations.

"You're hard to get rid of," Ghost says with a small smile as they break away.

Soap grins, shaking his head. "Try and break up with me again and I'll kill you."

Phrasing it like that reignites fear in Ghost, but he grits his teeth to snuff the feeling. Soap seems to notice, because his eyes sweep the ground and he opens his mouth to speak but promptly closes it again.

"Nothing has to change," Soap finally offers in a reassuring tone.

Ghost imagines that can't be true, but he is exhausted enough to just trust Soap. He nods and sighs. "I don't want things to change." His breath is visible in the cold air around them.

Soap nods in agreement. He looks *so* happy. "So is it too soon to pitch my 'property of Ghost' forehead tattoo idea?"

"I'm quite offended that you don't have that already…" Ghost tsks and looks Soap up and down in feign judgment. Soap's face brightens through a toothy grin as he laughs, and Ghost really starts to believe that everything is gonna be okay.

A moment passes, and Ghost watches Soap's face settle into something more serious. "Does it freak you out to hear that I love you?"

"Yes," Ghost says immediately, not realizing how cruel that must sound.

Soap doesn't look offended. "I know," Soap nods, "I understand. You don't have to say it back, I get it," he shrugs, smiling awkwardly, "I know that you- that you do," he trails off.

Heat rises into Ghost's face. "I do." Ghost trails his eyes over Soap; at the gifted watch snug on his wrist and the borrowed (stolen) sweatpants around his waist. He thinks about the second toothbrush in his bathroom and the seat that he always saves for Soap in the common room because he says it's the comfiest. Soap was right; he's already said it a million times. "I really, really do." He holds Soap's gaze and nods, wanting so bad to say more but feeling like the words may stir up a buried curse.

It seems to be enough for Soap, because his eyebrows raise and his eyes wrinkle, disappearing into his smiling face. He leans up to kiss Ghost again, a chaste peck, and gently

pulls down Ghost’s mask before he steps back.

The base is vacant but the wind whistles loudly. “It’s cold,” Soap says after a moment, leading the way out of the fence and towards the barracks. “Stay with me tonight?”

Ghost can’t think of a single thing he wants more. “Sure.”

Ghost doesn’t have much trouble sleeping after that.

Chapter End Notes

Omg. I can't believe we are at the end. First of all, a little about this chapter and I: I am a social worker and as I was writing this I was spending a lot of time thinking about Ghost and his trauma and what kind of defense mechanisms he has as a result of them. I hope this doesn't come across as "angst" so much as slight inner turmoil and miscommunication?

I originally wanted to write a ghostsoap longfic but I haven't written in awhile and I was sure I couldn't do it. So I came up with this idea instead and I had so much fun writing it! I have been pondering some longfic, getting together, slow burn, sexual tension, first time plots. The military stuff is SO intimidating though! Also, some of the kinktober prompts are inspiring to say the least. I could see myself writing a couple of those if my motivation doesn't fade too much!

Thank you everyone who has read this fic and interacted with it in some way. Every kudo, bookmark, subscription, comment, and hit means so much to me! The comments were so motivating and inspiring and I loved hearing everyone's thoughts. I am so so happy to leave even a small impression on this fandom and this ship. Thank you all again <3<3

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!